

WWF vs. WCW

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Monday Night War Ratings ... Much More!

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WINTER 1996

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Mailbag

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When they teamed as The Hollywood Blonds in WCW, Steve Austin and Brian Pillman won the WCW World tag team title in 1993. Reader Elizabeth Sawyer thinks they could have similar success together in the WWF.

BETTER AS BLONDS

I think a reunion of The Hollywood Blonds is just what the WWF tag team scene needs right now ("The Price Is Right For Austin: The New Million-Dollar Stable," Fall 1996). Steve Austin is doing well on his own, but I think he would be better off if he teamed with Brian Pillman. When Austin and Pillman first teamed, they were both different people than they are now. Austin had hair, and Pillman was sane. Now, Austin's tough, yet reserved demeanor could complement Pillman's unpredictability. Both men have the ability to win either singles title in the WWF, but if they teamed, they could easily win the

World tag team belts and dominate the WWF's weak tag team division.

ELIZABETH SAWYER
Dallas, TX

UNITED WCW STANDS...

What happened to the unity that used to be so prevalent in WCW? The New World Order is making me sick with all its sneak-attacks. These men have been getting away with this stuff for too long, and it has to stop! WCW needs to make these men pay dearly for their actions. I am getting tired of seeing Randy Savage and The Four Horsemen getting spray-painted almost every week. The next time that happens, everyone

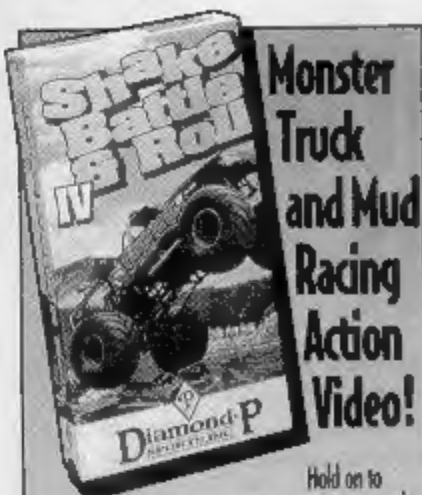
from the locker room should come out and kick the crap out of those cowards, but I never see that happening.

Where are Harlem Heat, Alex Wright, Eddy Guerrero, and "Diamond" Dallas Page when these attacks are going on? Fans know these guys are there, since they are announced as being on the card or have already wrestled on the card. These guys need to stop sitting on their butts in the locker room and start thinking about their company. This situation is only going to get worse. If these guys don't help their fellow WCW wrestlers now, they better not expect to get saved when the NWO attacks them.

RYAN STEPHENS
Irvington, VA
(Continued on page 6)



The members of Harlem Heat consider themselves the toughest men in WCW, but reader Ryan Stephens wonders why they and a lot of other WCW mainstays aren't standing up to the NWO.



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Mailbag

(Continued from page 4)

GANGSTA GLORY

When fans list the top tag teams in the sport, there's one team that almost always gets overlooked: The Gangstas. No team in wrestling today can match the desire and intensity of The Gangstas. And they have the ability to sustain their intensity throughout their matches. I'd like to see the Steiners or Henry and Phineas Godwinn do battle with more than one team a night at the ECW Arena, especially when one of those teams is sure to be The

Eliminators. The Godwinns probably wouldn't last the first match, and the Steiners obviously couldn't, because they left ECW for WCW.

Need more proof? What other team can boast that they beat ECW's three top tag teams in one night to win the tag team title?

ANTHONY CHU
Philadelphia, PA

HE'S BACK

I am glad that "Psycho" Sid Vicious has returned to the WWF, and I can tell from the cheers he gets from the crowds that I'm not the only one happy to see him back. I think this time around he will finally win the Intercontinental or World title, but I hope he doesn't have to turn bad again to do so.

MATT BARKER
Riverton, KS



"Psycho" Sid is back in the WWF, and the fans just love him. Reader Matt Barker hopes Sid doesn't feel he has to turn rulebreaker to win a title there.

A TRIVIAL PURSUIT

Your "Wrestling Championship Trivia Challenge" magazine-within-a-magazine was absolutely incredible (Fall 1996)! My friends and I spent hours taking turns trying to answer the questions. As long-time wrestling fans, we found that some of the answers came to us easily, but a few of the questions really stumped me, especially those in the "Wrestling Abroad" section. A lot of this information was stuff that I never really realized I knew. It was a lot of fun digging through some of my old magazines looking

for the answers to the tough questions. Now I'm rereading all of my old wrestling magazines, preparing for your next trivia challenge.

BEN HOLDEN
Grand Rapids, MI



Bret Hart has made no secret of the lack of respect he has for Shawn Michaels, the man who beat him for the WWF title at WrestleMania X. *WrestleMania* Crabbtree thinks he ought to challenge Michaels to a rematch.

NO RESPECT FOR HART

I think that Bret Hart has been way too hard on Shawn Michaels with some of his bitter comments. Bret has absolutely nothing to complain about. Shawn is definitely a worthy WWF World champion who defends his title three or four times every week against the best competition in the entire world. Bret would have the right to complain if Shawn hadn't pinned him cleanly at WrestleMania XII back in March, but he did. Since Bret started talking bad about Shawn, I've lost a great deal of respect for him. If he wants to prove that Shawn is unworthy of holding the belt, then he should stop talking trash and get into the ring and try to prove he's better.

MARTA CRABTREE
Jamestown, TN

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BACK ISSUES

Locker Room Report

with Bill Apter

ONE OF THE things that's always amazed me about wrestlers is their attachment to the sport and unwillingness to retire ... or stay retired. I can't think of any other sport in which the bond is so strong (though boxing might be a close second). Wrestling has so many Michael Jordans and Magic Johnsons who can't stay away.

Curt Hennig couldn't stay away from the ring. True, Hunter Hearst Helmsley is taking responsibility for luring him back, but the real reason "Mr. Perfect" returned probably had something to do with his craving the spotlight.

The latest example of this is "Mr. Perfect" Curt Hennig, who has been drawn back into active duty by Hunter Hearst Helmsley, although by my way of thinking, Hennig created a situation in which Hennig would have no choice but to return. Wrestling runs in his blood, straight from his father, Larry Hennig, and Curt was incapable of staying away.

"There are some things that a man does, and some things that a man doesn't mind doing," Hennig said. "Wrestling is one of those things that I do, and if Helmsley wants a piece of me, he's welcome to come and get it."

I asked Hennig whether he was addicted to wrestling or even capable of staying away from the ring.

"Wrestling's my life," he said. "But if you're asking me whether I can keep away, nothing controls me. I am the master of my own destiny."

Sometimes you have to wonder. Look at Ric Flair, who was forced into a retirement he seemingly wanted by Hulk Hogan, then did everything in his power to force a return. His wife, Beth Flair, once told me that Ric seemed comfortable during his retirement, but after a while, "you could see that he wanted to get back. Ric's not one to sit around and do nothing for long."

Not when there are rings to wrestle in and fans who still want to see him. Who knows if the pull is the ring or the spotlight? Dusty Rhodes struggles to stay retired. Like a recovering cigarette addict, he allows himself to sneak a puff every now and then, then pulls himself away. And it's not easy for Rhodes, who's around wrestling all the time and still feels he



could do some damage.

"Let me tell you something, Willie Apter," Rhodes said. "'American Dream' Dusty Rhodes can still beat these punks, but there ain't nothin' to prove anymore. But with this New World Order thing going on, I don't know ... maybe I have to get involved again somehow."

Rhodes stays away from active competition by remaining close to the ring in his TV role. But he admits that sometimes it's tough.

"I can still wrestle," Rhodes said. "No doctor's ever said anything to me about quitting. It's a decision I made on my own."

Fine, and so far, he's stuck to it ... for the most part. But how about Hulk Hogan, who keeps going into semi-retirement and keeps coming back. Some people might say that Hogan can't retire because his movie career hasn't worked out, but there's more to it than that. The fact is that Hogan likes winning titles more than he likes making movies and TV shows. Others have suggested that Hogan's latest return as a rulebreaker is a sign that he doesn't care anymore and is about to retire for real. I'm not so sure about that. I've known Hogan for a long time, and I've never seen him having so much fun.

Hogan's not going to stay away. Randy Savage, another guy who came out of retirement, is not going to stay away. He tried that once already, then he allowed himself to get lured back into the ring.

I asked Dr. Sidney M. Basil, the noted wrestling psychologist, about this the other day. Basil seems to think it has nothing to do with the lure of the ring.

"These people are incapable of backing down from a challenge," Dr. Basil said. "If somebody says something to them, they can't turn their backs and walk away. They have to settle the matter. They have confrontational personalities and large egos that won't allow them to ignore a problem or a challenge. As long as they are anywhere near a wrestling ring, they are going to keep wrestling. The only solution is for them to find jobs away from the ring."



Dusty Rhodes is a broad-based guy, not a wrestler. He'll tell you, though, that it's very difficult for him to resist making some sort of comeback, especially now that the NWO is trying to destroy WCW.

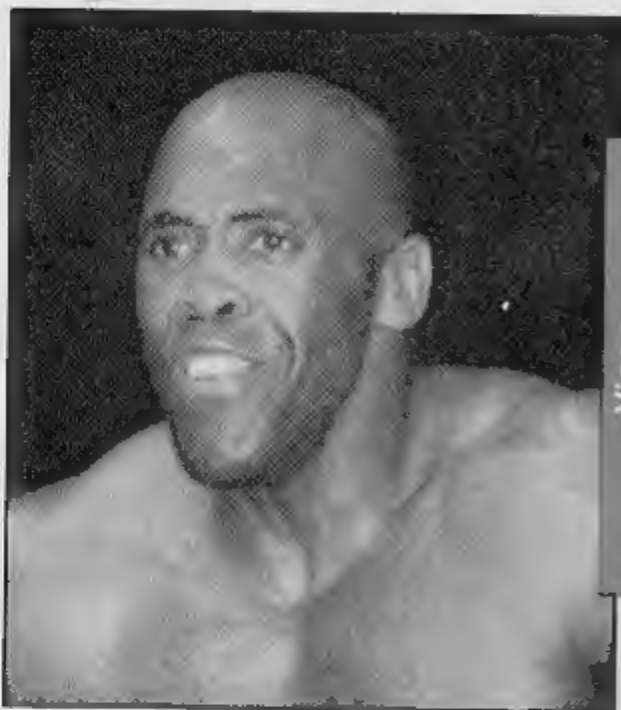
But for most of these men, that's like telling them to stay away from the beautiful woman who's causing them so much trouble. They're willing to overlook the trouble for the sake of beauty, then they complain when the woman does them wrong all over again.

You know something, though? I understand what Dr. Basil is saying, but I understand the lure of the ring idea, too. I've been around the sport now for three decades, and other magazines and newspapers have offered me jobs, but I'm always turning them down because they have nothing to do with wrestling. This company puts out a hockey magazine, but I have little interest in taking pictures at hockey games. Why? I don't know, but there's something about being right there on the ring, shooting the action.

It's energizing. What other sport can say that? □

Straight Talk

with Eddie Ellner



Vince

Wrestling Federation's *Warriors Of Wrestling* show. The AWF features such "superstars" as **Koko B. Ware**, **Sgt. Slaughter**, **Bob Orton**, **Chris Adams**, and a heavyweight champion by the name of **Tito Santana**. It also boasts the tag team dynasty known as **Greg Valentine** and **Tommy Rich**.

The AWF's claim to fame is that it incorporates boxing's round system. Note to AWF promoters: Guys, there is a reason that the round system has not been done before *with* success. It doesn't work! The fans don't want different. They want better. Just be content to be a regular wrestling federation with wrestlers that people care about instead of having viewers endure rounds of wrestling from wrestlers whose best matches took place in the '80s.

In fairness to this promotion, it was able to sign **The Road Warriors**. But let's face it: It's not the '80s anymore! The Warriors' most glorious of glory days ended back when they lost the NWA tag belts. Besides, either Vince or Eric will eventually pony up the do-re-mi to bring them on board.

I hear that the AWF's next big signing will be one of Adams' ex-wives.

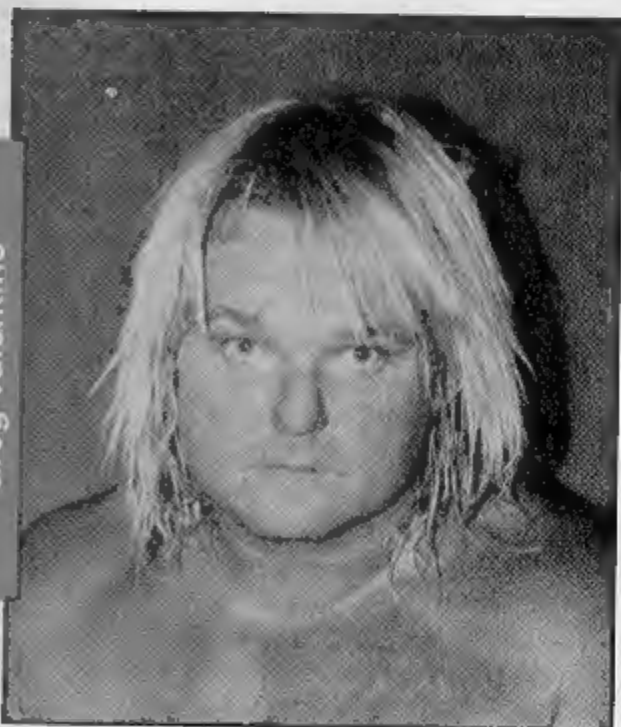
Yawn.

THE NEW WORLD ORDER continues to expand, but it isn't necessarily growing stronger. Founding members **Scott Hall**, **Kevin Nash**, and "**Hollywood**" **Hulk Hogan** recruited major league brains, cash, and brawn in the form of **Ted DiBiase** and **The Giant**, and the NWO was becoming stronger than any clique we had seen in years. But it's been downhill from there.

The faux **Sting**? Haven't we been there and done that already? Remember **Barry Windham** at Halloween Havoc 1990? **Six** was added soon after. Honestly, I knew **The 1-2-3 Kid** couldn't be a kid forever, but a number? Now Hogan and company have **Vince**, a man who looks a great deal like DiBiase's estranged servant **Virgil**. Wait a minute—he *is* Virgil.

My point is simple: For the NWO to survive, it is going to have to do a whole lot better than a **Rich Little**-type impressionist, a junior cruiserweight, and a former (and now current) DiBiase lackey. WCW can sleep well, at least for tonight. Who's next? **Billy Kidman**? **Barry Horowitz**? Either one of the **Mulkey** brothers?

From the Multiple-Round Wrestling Retread Dept.: I caught the television premiere of the American



Greg Valentine



Jim Ross

From the Airing Dirty Laundry Dept.: **Jim Ross** is a little miffed these days. I guess the frustration has been building up inside of him for years. What's the problem, Jim? I'm sure those large paychecks over the past three years have cleared since you joined Vince and company. What changed? In a tirade not seen since, well, since Hulk Hogan's turn, Ross berated his employers and place of employment. If he weren't under contract to the WWF, I'd say Ross is potential NWO material.

Now, out of revenge, Ross is unleashing the "Beatlemania" versions of **Razor Ramon** and **Diesel**. What next, Jimbo? A phony **Outback Jack**? A counterfeit **S.D. Jones**? Ross has a veritable plethora of WWF caricatures from which to choose.

I always Ross, though. He is the top play-by-play guy in the biz. But bringing in cardboard cutouts of former superstars is not going to satisfy his lust for revenge, and it's not going to satisfy the fans. This ploy will just make him a laughingstock, a caricature of himself. And we all know that **Gene Okerlund** has the corner on that market.

From the We've Got Our Invasion, You've Got Yours Dept.: The wrestlers of Extreme Championship Wrestling (at least for a few days) managed to break down the doors of the hallowed WWF. ECW mutants all over the world rejoiced. These freaks believed that they got the best of ol' Vincent K. Trust me, folks, the man knows what he is doing. He allowed these outbursts, and maybe one day, he'll allow a match or two ... as long as it raises his ratings and pay-per-view buy rates.

But the bottom line is that ECW is not the cure for what ails the WWF. Outside of a select few ex-

Trekkies and dateless wonders, very few people know what ECW is all about. For most of the world, **The Sandman** helps you sleep, **Taz** is a cartoon character, and **Raven** is the subject of some old poem.

This should have all the impact of an AWF invasion. Yawn.

From the Mr. Pot Meet Mr. Kettle Dept.: My new best friend, "Hollywood" Hulk Hogan, not only called **Randy Savage** "bald," he proceeded to adorn the "Macho Man" with spray-on hair. Note to Hogan: Take off the bandanna, Kojak. A Wagner Power Sprayer couldn't cover up that pate.

If you must, you can insert your own **Bill Apter** joke here. I'm fresh out.

Until next issue, remember: If you can't laugh at yourself, make fun of other people. Especially when that person is your senior editor.

[Editor's note: We've got a much better idea—we'll laugh at ourselves and make fun of Eliner. Better yet, we'll just make fun of Eliner. We'll have a party. Thousands of fans will attend. We'll make it an all-day festival. Ah, maybe not. What we'll do instead is remind you that, as always, the views expressed in this column are those of Eddie Eliner alone, and they do not necessarily reflect the opinions of anyone else on the staff of this magazine.] □



Raven

Head To Head

SHAWN MICHAELS



VS

REY MISTERIO JR.

Shawn Michaels and Rey Mysterio Jr. have blazed similar trails in professional wrestling. Both had famous mentors who drove them to be the best they could be. Both also had their critics who said that their lack of size would impede their progress. And both proved their critics wrong and have become superstars, Michaels as WWF World champion, and Mysterio as one of AAA's standouts and as WCW cruiserweight champion.

Michaels and Mysterio are just now reaching their primes.

Michaels has proven two things in his trailblazing. First, he proved that great tag team wrestlers (he won two AWA World tag team titles with Marty Jannetty and two WWF tag titles with Diesel) can evolve into even better singles wrestlers. Second, he validated the claim that to win a world heavyweight title, a man does not need to be big and muscular. "The Heartbreak Kid" is just 6', 234 pounds. Mysterio began his career in the shadow of his uncle, Rey Mysterio Sr. But he was determined to emerge from that shadow, and he did so by working hard in Mexico. Only in the last year has he had a chance to succeed in the U.S., first in ECW, then in WCW.

Though he is just 5'3", 140, Mysterio is regarded by many as the best wrestler, pound-for-pound, in the world. It seems as if he invents a new move or two in almost every match.

A Michaels-Mysterio match might take place someday, but for now, it can only occur in the arena of our minds. We asked four very different wrestlers to analyze the two wrestlers and try to figure out who might win and how. Here's what might happen if Michaels and Mysterio clashed inside the ring, "Head To Head."



2 COLD SCORPIO

Both Shawn Michaels and Rey Mysterio have proven that size isn't everything in this sport. Sometimes it looks to me like they've stolen a few of my moves, but if they did, I couldn't blame them. There are a lot of Scorpio wannabes out there. I have set the standard for this style of wrestling.

When Mysterio entered ECW, he had his share of doubters, including me. Here was this puny guy trying to compete in an extreme federation. Man, he proved us all wrong! He could execute moves that are just as devastating as what a heavyweight could do.

Michaels has speed, agility, and acrobatic skill, too. He went all the way to the top of the WWF when most people said he couldn't. I respect him. He's proof that you don't need to be 6'6", 300 pounds to compete among the elite.

Each man would execute moves and countermoves without one gaining an advantage over the other in the early going. Mysterio's array of "Frankensteiners" would play a big part. Michaels has had problems with concussions in the past. He would be susceptible to that type of attack. As fast as Michaels is, Mysterio is faster, because he's 100 pounds lighter.

Michaels' experience as a rulebreaker would probably help offset Mysterio's high-flying. He isn't afraid to clench his fists and use them if he must. He would also have the advantage in strength, an edge he normally doesn't have, and I think he'd use that. He would be constantly looking to set Mysterio up for that superkick, which is a pretty devastating finisher.

In the end, experience would win. Michaels has that, plus a good ground attack. Mysterio would be too anxious. He'd eventually make a mistake that would cost him the bout. I'd have to give this one to Michaels.

Former WCW World tag team and ECW TV champion 2 Cold Scorpio is regarded as one of the floor artists in the world.



THE GREAT MUTA

I have a tremendous amount of respect for both Shawn Michaels and Rey Mysterio Jr. They have risen to the heights of professional wrestling. It would be an honor to face either Shawn for the WWF title or Rey for the WCW cruiserweight belt.

With my great admiration for the two, I find it difficult to pick a winner. But here is how I think the match would go. Both men would size each other up and try to figure out the proper game plan. Either could be dangerous to the other because of their sheer speed and, in Michaels' case, deceptive power. Being that they are fairly even in aerial ability, I think that Shawn would want to keep Rey on the mat and use his strength advantage. Like a great many of us, he has broken the rules and does not seem adverse to trying it again.

Shawn is fast, but I think Rey is slightly faster. He would have to confuse Michaels with a rapid succession of aerial moves and hope to frustrate Michaels into a situation where he loses his focus and abandons his aerial attack. Michaels is a better aerial wrestler than he is a brawler. When he brawls, he gets sloppy.

Shawn may have advantages in experience and strength, but Rey has intangibles that just cannot be measured. He has the heart and determination of a true champion. After all, how many wrestlers have outmatched Dean Malenko in a clean scientific match? That alone speaks volumes for the talent of Mysterio.

It would be close. Shawn did not get where he is today by taking the easy way out. He has been through his share of battles and for the most part has come out on top. But he has never seen anyone with as many moves as Mysterio. With all due respect to Shawn Michaels, I think Rey Mysterio could beat him.

The Great Muta, one of the finest aerial wrestlers in Japan, competes occasionally in WCW.



MIL MASCARAS

When I see wrestlers like Shawn Michaels and Rey Mysterio Jr., I see a little bit of myself. I see this as a true dream match between two skilled technical wrestlers that the fans would be thrilled to watch. I would be thrilled as well.

Rey has heritage on his side. His uncle, Rey Mysterio Sr., and I go way back. What I saw in him, I now see in his nephew. They are both risk-takers. They have more talent than most professional wrestlers today. Don't get me wrong. Rey Jr. is his own man. His uncle helped him, but he has made himself great. He has done a lot to add to the credibility of WCW's cruiserweight division.

Shawn has almost 13 years logged in this business. You cannot deny his experience. He was also trained by a true great, Jose Lothario, and Jose's influence speaks volumes. He proved himself as a great tag team wrestler who had the ability to make a tough transition into singles wrestling. Shawn may be flashy, but he can back it up with a stunning aerial attack, an underrated mat attack, and the ability to get down and dirty with the fiercest rulebreakers.

In this match, Shawn would want to assert himself immediately, as any experienced wrestler would. I would not put it past him to toss the rulebook aside just to throw off Rey's strategy. Rey would have to counter that right away. He would have to bounce off every available turnbuckle and rope.

An evenly fought battle would come down to who made the first big mistake. I truly believe that Rey is more focused than Shawn now. The WWF championship provides a great many distractions, while Rey is focused on defending the honor and title of the cruiserweight division. I would have to give this match to Rey, but I think it would last at least 30 minutes.

Mil Mascaras, perhaps the most famous masked wrestler in history, still competes occasionally in Mexico and Japan.



JIM DEL RAY

Who do I think would win this? Why not ask me an easy question? Could Jimmy Del Ray beat Shawn Michaels or Rey Mysterio Jr.? The answer is simple: It wouldn't be easy, but I could beat them both.

Mysterio looks like that 90-pound weakling that you see on those old Charles Atlas ads. You know, the guy who everybody kicks sand at on the beach. Oh, so he's really 140 pounds? Please. I was 140 pounds when I was 12, for crying out loud.

But I gotta be honest: I know that if you underestimate Mysterio, you'll pay a big price. He wants you to get overconfident. I know from the time we were in ECW together that he's tougher than he looks.

But he'd want to prove that to Michaels right away. Big mistake. I know Shawn likes to show off, but he's been in wrestling long enough to learn how important patience is. Against Mysterio, I think he'd stall a lot, maybe leave the ring a few times slow Mysterio down. Even though Michaels is quick, he's not as quick as Mysterio, and I think he'd try to keep the match at a fairly slow pace.

He'd do what Dean Malenko did in his first few matches with Mysterio in WCW. He'd keep him on the mat and try to wear him down, maybe stretch the match to 30 or 40 minutes. I know that's what I'd do, and Michaels is almost as smart as me. Sooner or later, Mysterio would get impatient and try to end the match with one spectacular move.

You can't do that against Michaels. He'd see it coming and find a way to reverse it. Once Mysterio was down, Shawn would probably hit him with a flying forearm or flying elbowsmash. He'd be set up for the superkick then, and the match would be over.

Former Heavenly Body Jim Del Ray has wrestled Michaels and has seen Mysterio firsthand many times. He's currently active on the independent circuit.

Point/Counterpoint

POINT

STING WAS JUSTIFIED IN DECLARING HIMSELF A FREE AGENT

By Steve Anderson

LET'S MAKE NO mistake about it. For the past 10 years, Sting has established himself as a man of honor. He should never have to prove his commitment to what is good. When Ted DiBiase attempted to perpetrate his Impostor Sting scheme, the wrestling world blinked. We asked ourselves, *How could a man of such dignity so easily turn against all the people who trusted him?*

The answer was simple. He didn't. That man may have looked like Sting, but he couldn't replicate his character. The NWO-induced paranoia in WCW caused friends and foes alike to question the "Stinger." They were too easily duped. They ignored Sting's past and, even worse, they ignored DiBiase's past. Remember, he once brought a fake Undertaker to the WWF.

What else should Sting have done? No one bothered to investigate the incident after it happened. They were all too quick to assume the worst. Even Lex Luger, a man who has flip-flopped between good and bad throughout his entire career, just assumed that his best friend had gone bad. Luger should be ashamed. WCW should be ashamed.

By declaring himself a free agent, Sting sent a message to WCW: Remember how good you had it when I was your leader. Appreciate me.

Throughout his career, Sting has granted second, third, and fourth chances to the likes of Luger and Ric Flair. They may not have been the wisest decisions, but if being too trusting is Sting's worst character flaw, he is still head and shoulders above most. Other wrestlers would have just turned bad. Sting took the more honorable option. He is now an island unto himself.

In a time of war, some WCW wrestlers have made a significant tactical error. They didn't trust their standard-bearer and were all too quick to

believe DiBiase, Hulk Hogan, and his New World Order cohorts. The NWO did not even have to sign Sting to do significant damage to its enemy. It planted the seeds of mistrust that have now germinated into a "Sting-less" WCW.

All of the NASCAR race cars with his likeness on them and "I'm sorry's" may not be enough. Even if Sting does forgive WCW in the future, things will never be the same. Sting's relationship with Luger will never be the same. Professional wrestling with a free agent Sting will never be the same.

That is WCW's fault, not Sting's.

Steve Anderson is a senior writer for WRESTLE AMERICA.



How many times has Sting given Lex Luger the benefit of the doubt when others said he was not trustworthy? If Luger couldn't do the same for Sting just once, says Steve Anderson, Sting has every right to feel betrayed.

There are two sides to every story, and nowhere is that more true than in professional wrestling. Every issue, two of the world's most respected mat journalists will debate an important issue concerning the sport, facing off for an exchange of ideas, leaving the final decision up to YOU!

COUNTERPOINT

STING WAS NOT JUSTIFIED IN DECLARING HIMSELF A FREE AGENT

By Brandi Mankiewicz

STING THIS IS reality. Reality this is Sting. Have you two met?

My advice to Sting is quite simple: Just suck it up and give up the little temper tantrum. Free agent or not, he is still an employee of WCW, and WCW is at war with the NWO. War, like politics, makes for strange bedfellows. Sting needs to stop whining and help WCW fend off Hogan, DiBiase, and their band of thieves.

Declaring himself a free agent is not how a former and possibly future world champion should conduct himself. Instead of a title belt, we should give him a pacifier and rattle. He says he is looking out for himself and only himself. Does that mean he is going to fight WCW and the NWO all by himself? Is he going to start SCW (Sting Championship Wrestling)?

Sting might be feeling some bitterness toward WCW right now, but he should hate the NWO a lot more. And by not helping WCW, he is indirectly helping the NWO. DiBiase probably never dreamed his little scam would work out this well. Sting did not help matters by not calling someone after he watched his own "turn" on TV. He just waited for friends and co-workers to come to him. This is not a good time for Sting to sit back and wait for everyone to massage his ego.

Okay, so WCW was stupid for falling for DiBiase's scam. Sting has been forgiving before. He forgave Luger and Fair many times for crying out loud. What did WCW do as a federation that these men didn't do as individual rulebreakers? If Sting is truly the honorable man he claims to be, he'll forgive this transgression and get on with his life.

Sting's free agency is not a realistic, long-term solution to his problems. The bottom line is that it is a bad time for a man to be on his own in WCW. What happens if the NWO decides to

sneak-attack him? If Sting isn't willing to help his old friends in WCW anymore, they might not be willing to help him either. WCW needs Sting and he needs WCW. Everybody knows that.

So let's all shake hands and make up. The future of WCW is depending upon it.

Brandi Mankiewicz is the managing editor of WRESTLE AMERICA.



Now that Sting is a "free agent," he may have to battle The Giant and the rest of the NWO without any help from his old WCW friends. Brandi Mankiewicz argues that he's hurting himself and WCW by being so stubborn.

WCW Ratings

WORLD TITLE

For period ending October 10, 1996

1	Hulk Hogan	-	1	1	Gutless thug
2	Randy Savage	=	7	2	New WCW franchise?
3	The Giant	+	4	1	Quite the actor now
4	Lex Luger	=	5	2	Feeling stung by Sting
5	Rey Mysterio Jr.	+	1	5	Just cruising along
6	Sting	-	20	2	Get over it
7	Arn Anderson	=	7	2	Horseman forever
8	Dallas Page	+	2	7	Love that "Diamond cutter"
9	Chris Benoit	=	1	9	Don't get him angry
10	Dean Malenko	-	1	10	Cold and calculating

WORLD TAG TEAM

1. Harlem Heat	+	13	1	Cooled off PE
2 Public Enemy	=	2	2	Had their 15 minutes
3. Nasty Boys	+	15	1	They sold out
4 Hall/Nash	-	1	4	Mean, and proud of it
5 Meng/Barbarian	-	1	5	Not serious contenders

U.S. TITLE

1	Ric Flair	-	1	1	Shoulder surgery?
2	The Giant	+	1	2	He'll take any title
3	Chris Benoit	+	1	3	Champion to be?
4	Konnor	-	3	1	A man with an attitude
5	Eddy Guerrero	=	3	2	Plenty of talent

M=momentum; C=consecutive issues in ratings; 12-IH=12-issue high



The Giant

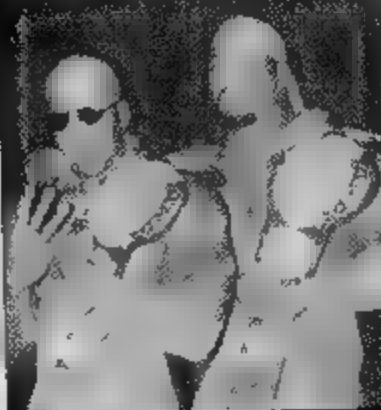


Chris Benoit



Dean Malenko

WRESTLER OF THE MONTH



HARLEM HEAT

The WCW tag team scene has been heating up lately, and right at the center of the action are Booker T and Stevie Ray with the World tag team belts draped over their shoulders. It's hard to believe, but Harlem Heat has won the title six times now.

Harlem Heat lost the belts to Public Enemy in September, but regained them just eight days later. All Booker and Stevie had to do was turn up the heat on Johnny Grunge, who went in to the bout with an injured knee, and wait for a little interference from their managers, Col. Rob Parker and Sister Sherri.

Though they are rule breakers who too often rely on outside interference to win, Booker T and Stevie Ray have shown everyone a lot in the last few years. They are quick and athletic and more often or not, they are champions. PE, Kevin Nash and Scott Hall, The Nasty Boys, Meng and The Barbarian, and no doubt many other teams will challenge the Heat soon.

Somehow, though, they always seem ready to meet any challenge.



ALL THE MEMBERS of the New World Order like to brag that they are going to change the face of wrestling. Of course, a lot of the talk is mere bluster, but recent events demonstrate that Hulk Hogan and company are dead serious in their quest.

One of the gang's recent additions is Six, the former 1-2-3 Kid. His brilliant grappling skills, speed, and agility would appear to be a perfect complement

to the larger members of the NWO, but there were reports of a conflict between Hogan and Scott Hall over Six's role in the NWO. Hogan originally wanted him to be the group's official chauffeur, while Hall thought that would be demeaning. Apparently Hall has won this mini-battle, as Six has yet to don his chauffeur's cap.

So everyone in the NWO will tell you that everything is fine within the group, but I wonder if that's true. Sources tell me the NWO was also divided over whether to invite Jeff Jarrett into the fold. Hall and Kevin Nash were reportedly very interested in bringing him in, but Hogan didn't like the idea.

The NWO is so confident in itself as an organization now that it has begun selling NWO T-shirts. They also have television time on WCW telecasts, as a result of their victory at "War Games." Even this issue of contains a paid NWO ad. Eric Bischoff can complain, but the NWO is a threat that won't disappear soon.

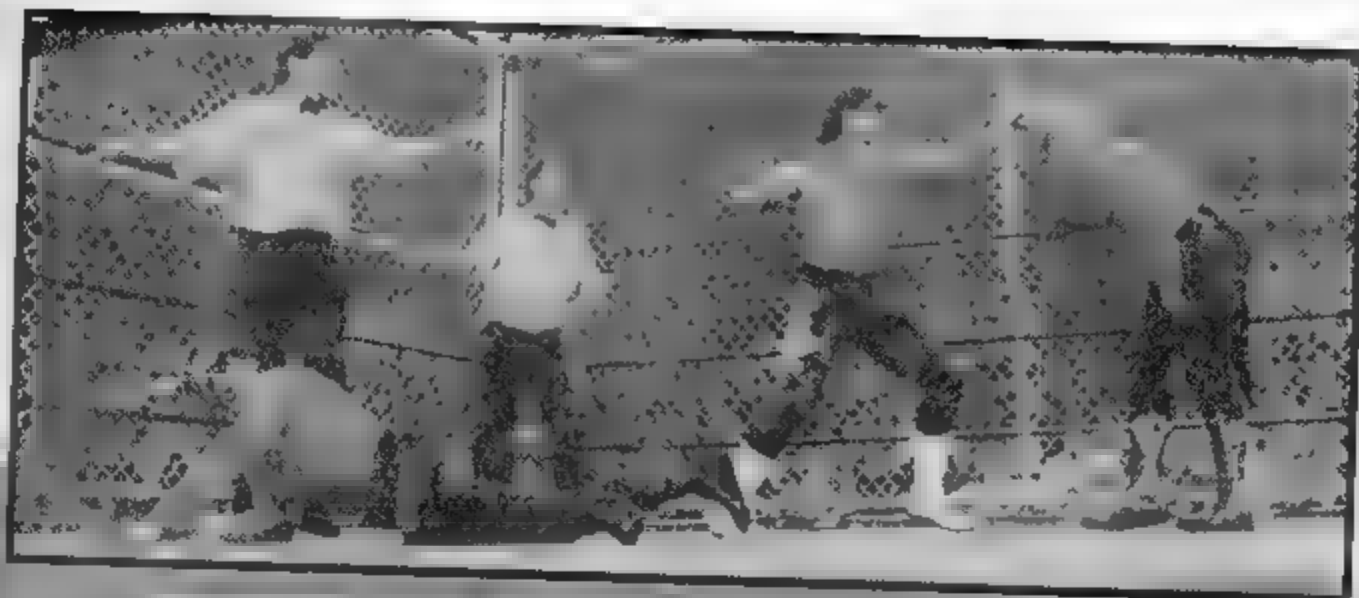
Unfortunately for WCW, in its time of greatest need, it may be losing one of its most valuable wrestlers. While Sting hasn't yet declared any allegiance to the NWO, he definitely has made it clear he wants nothing to do with WCW.

The friction started when an impostor Sting attacked Lex Luger on *WCW Monday Nitro*. Sting grew incensed after Luger insisted his attacker really was Sting.

In "War Games" at Fall Brawl, Sting was scheduled to join his comrades for an eight-man match against the NWO (including the impostor Sting), but he appeared only near the end, and he left after pummeling four members of the NWO. On a later *Nitro*, he said he was getting tired of people not trusting him, and he refused to join Luger for a match against Chris Benoit and Steve McMichael.

"As far as I'm concerned, I'm a free agent!" Sting





crowed "I have to start doing what's best for me, not for some cause or organization. If people in WCW want to treat me like garbage well, they're going to get back the same sort of treatment!"

"Sting is making a big mistake," said Luger. "Right now this may look like the best move for him, but he's leaving himself without any allies, and in the cur-

rent situation, that's a real dangerous thing to do. I think—I hope—he'll come around."

Among Sting's enemies are the Horsemen, whose leader **Ric Flair** is none too happy that **Elizabeth** has again gotten friendly with his mortal enemy and Elizabeth's ex-wife), **Randy Savage**.

"She'll never have it as good as she had it with The Four Horsemen if she goes back to Savage. I hope she realizes that," Flair said. "I still think there's a chance she'll join the NWO eventually. Hogan has after all promised her movie roles. If she does join, it may be an offer too tempting for her to pass up."

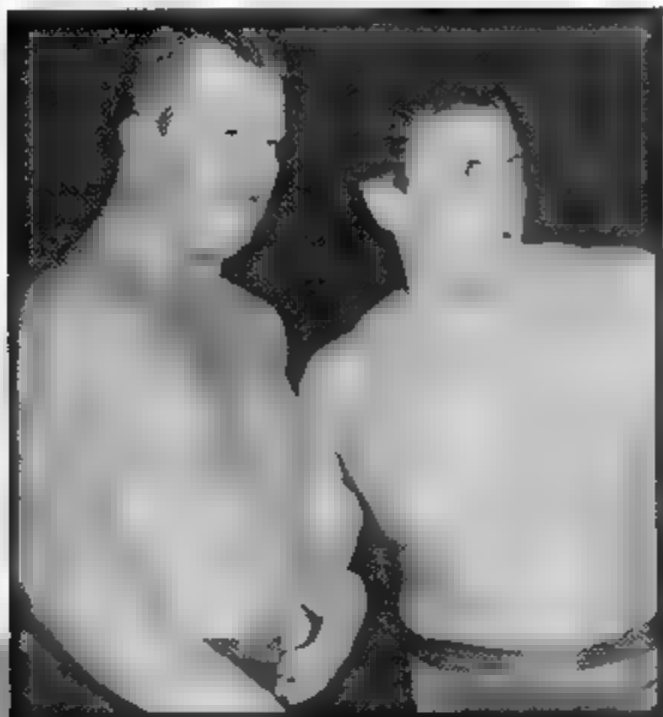
Meanwhile, Flair has other problems to worry about, namely his right shoulder, which he injured during a September tour of Japan. At press time, he was leaning toward having surgery on it. If he does have the surgery, he'll probably miss about three months of action.

A big breakup in WCW not many are talking about concerns **The Blue Bloods**. **Earl Robert Eaton** has officially left the camp of **Lord Steven Regal** and **Squire David Taylor** to become just plain old **Bobby Eaton** again. Now Eaton's locked in a hot feud with Taylor, and he has done well in matches with him.

"Man, sometimes I ask myself, *What was I thinking?*" Eaton confided. "Lord knows why I ever thought that sleaze Regal would be good for my career, but now I'm out, and I'm ready to show the American people that when I fight on my own terms there isn't a tougher man in this sport. Soon I'll be going after Regal and his TV title!"

Col. Robert Parker is hoping to get **Kurasawa** back under contract again. The up-and-coming Japanese wrestler didn't accomplish much under





Parker a few years ago in WCW, but he impressed a lot of people by beating both **Fair** and **Riki Choshu** in the same week this fall in the Orient.

Maybe Parker had better make sure his relationship with **Harlem Heat** is secure before he starts adding to his stable. The Heat regained the WCW World tag title eight days after **Public Enemy** beat

them, but **Booker T** and **Stevie Ray** are still not happy that Parker seems more interested in blowing kisses to **Sherri Martel** than helping them out.

Rick Steiner has looked good in singles action while his brother, **Scott**, has been recuperating from back and hip injuries. Can you believe referee **Nick Patrick** had the gall to ask that WCW fine **Randy Savage** \$1-million for roughing him up a bit during a match? Why is this guy still officiating?

Two of AAA's top stars, **Super Calo** and **Juventud Guerrera**, recently made their WCW debuts. Both men, along with **Rey Mysterio Jr.**, are old friends of **Konnan**, their fellow AAA competitor. They take pride in the relationship, but they're saddened that **Konnan** decided to join the **Dungeon of Doom**.

"It doesn't have to be this way," said **Guerrera**, who lost to **Konnan** in a brilliant contest at **Fall Brawl**. "Konnan doesn't need those people around him. He's a superstar on his own. I guess he has his reasons, but I hope he wakes up soon."

Konnan's response: "With all due respect, **Super Calo**, **Rey Mysterio**, and **Juventud Guerrera** should not be concerned with my business."

Not too long ago, a lot of experts thought **Ice Train** and **Scott Norton** were a tag team on the rise. Now they're violent enemies.

"Norton turned his back on me!" **Ice Train** claimed. "He called me the weak link of the team, so now he's paying the price! I made him submit at **Fall Brawl**, and I intend to make him submit a lot over the circuit until he's ready to admit he was the weak link!"

Something tells me he'll be waiting a long time for that admission.



Care much about what they think.



JIMMY HART: "I NEVER SHOULD LEFT HULK"

With World Championship Wrestling facing its worst crisis ever at the hands of the NWO, the question needs to be asked: Could all of this have been avoided? Jimmy Hart thinks the answer to that question is a resounding "Yes!"



By Craig Peters

THE IMAGE HAS become almost laughably familiar so much so that it can't help but force its way into your head when you think of the name "Jimmy Hart."

There's carnage in the ring. A man is down, maybe two or three men. Two or three men are unleashing a hideously brutal beating on the men who are either struggling to protect themselves, or who have slipped into the passivity of unconsciousness.

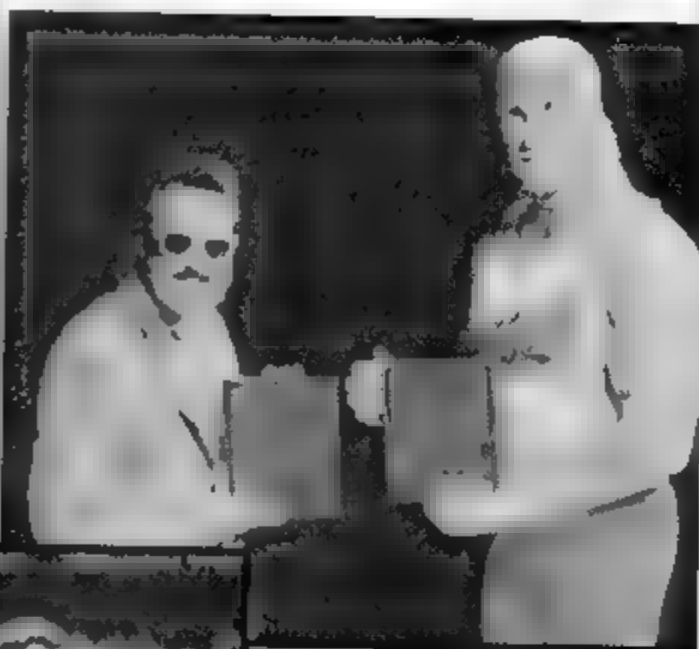
And amidst it all, there's Jimmy Hart leaping

about as if he has never even heard of decibel screaming through his megaphone with a screechy insistence that long ago slipped over into incomprehensibility.

The image is familiar because through the years Jimmy Hart has been there. Sometimes it's been his men doing the beating, sometimes his men have taken the beating. But he has always had something to say about it all.

And now, with World Championship Wrestling

HAVE HOGAN?"



It was only two years ago that Hart and Hogan posed together in the 1994 "Manager" and

Wrestling, he voted by readers of PW (above), and on the set of *Thunder in Paradise* (left). Hart now can't help but regret turning against Hogan.

down on the mat receiving a hideously brutal beating that is being unleashed by the NWO, and with no hope that someone will emerge from the dressing room to storm the ring and save the day, Jimmy Hart again has something to say.

This time, though, he's not jumping up and down. He's not screaming through his megaphone, and he's quite able to be understood clearly and distinctly, thank you. As a matter of fact, Jimmy Hart is downright somber. It's not a demeanor he often reveals to the public.

"Yeah, well, it's not like anything like this has ever happened before, either," Hart says in uncharacteristically quiet tones. "Time once was when you knew who your friends and enemies were. Life isn't so clear-cut anymore."

Indeed it's not. Last year, when Hart betrayed Hulk Hogan at Halloween Havoc, it seemed very clear who the good guys and the bad guys were. But as the events of that pay-per-view were being digested along with the contents of a nation's trick or treat bags, nobody in his right mind could ever have imagined the topsy-turvy events that would





rock WCW in 1996

Remorse? Yeah, a little bit." Hart said "I mean, look, it's not like I miss Hogan or anything. I engineered that Halloween Havoc ambush for a long, long time, and I have no regrets about doing it. But

Hart's voice trailed off into silence. He was clearly battling with a sense of confusion in his own mind about the events of the past, the nature of the present, and the potential for the future.

"You know, I think about it. Maybe that was the first step. Maybe that was the first domino in the line that set all the others to falling over. Hogan had complete and total faith and trust in me. That's fine, that's what enabled me to do what I wanted to do. But..."

Again Hart's voice trailed off. He thought a few moments before choosing his next words. He chose them carefully.

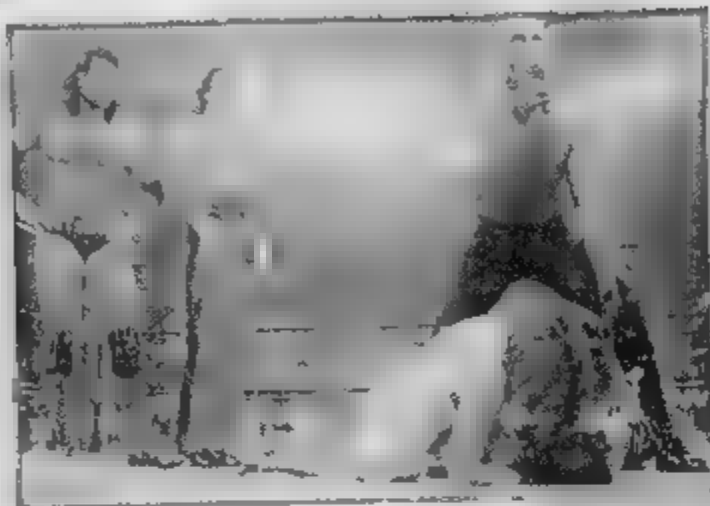
"I don't like what is happening in WCW right now. I don't like it one bit. I like to know who's friends with who. I don't believe in total anarchy, and that's what's happening in WCW right now. It's total anarchy."

"Say what you want about Jimmy Hart, but I believe in changing the system from within. Infraction? Sure. No problem. But this whole thing with The Outsiders and the NWO... it's not right. It's just not right."

"I never should have left Hulk Hogan. Maybe I were still managing him today, I could have prevented this whole NWO thing from happening. Or, at the very least, manipulated him so that he was a force against the NWO, not a driving force of the NWO."

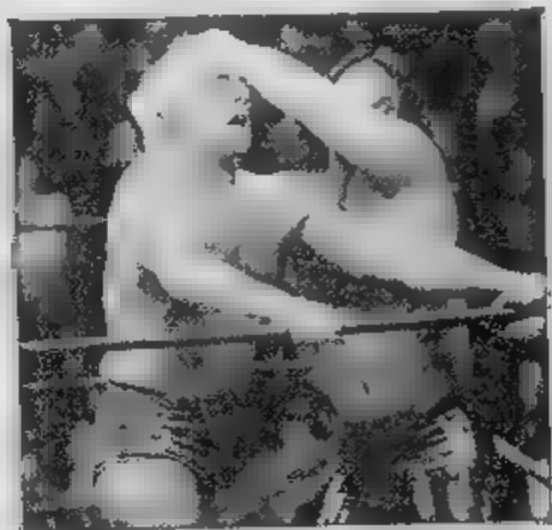
That, indeed, remains a major problem for WCW. The NWO was strong when Kevin Nash and Scott Hall formed the nucleus of its power. But once the "Hulkster" resounded 12-plus years of "Hulkamania," told the world to "suck it," and decided to side with

NWO vs. RANDY SAVAGE & ELIZABETH: Not only did Hulk Hogan do the unthinkable and spray-paint Elizabeth's dress as she tried to protect Randy Savage at Fall Brawl, he, Scott Hall, and Kevin Nash bragged about it.



HACKSAW DUGGAN vs. MIKE ENOS: Duggan got a little rough, and Enos wasn't ready in this match. Hackshaw's power was too much for Enos, one-half of the tag team known as Rough 'n' Ready.

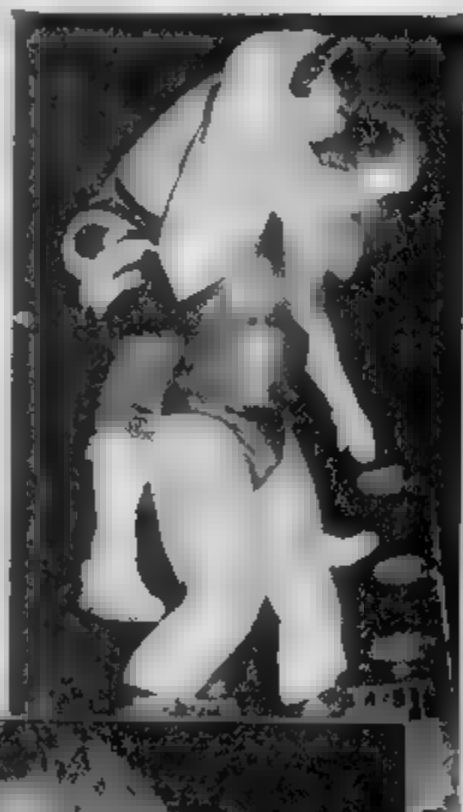
RANDY SAVAGE vs. RIC FLAIR: Everyone in WCW is worried about battling the NWO, but the "Macho Man" and the "Nature Boy" have never been able to settle their differences. Savage will gladly ram Flair's head into a turnbuckle anytime.



DALLAS PAGE vs. SCOTTY RIGGS: Aerial moves sometimes work against "Diamond" Dallas, but when he gets you in his clutches, as Riggs discovered, he'll show you no mercy when he drives you into the mat.



ROCK & SCOTT STEINER vs. HARLEM HEAT Scott always keeps an eye on the opposing team's corner, even if he is only applying an armbar on someone like Steve Ray (left). He couldn't keep an eye on anyone, however, when he was trapped in Booker T's rear chinlock (above).



THE GIANT vs. STING: How do you go about taking down a man who's 14 inches taller than you? On several occasions, Sting has tried climbing on The Giant's back and applying a sleeperhold (right). More often than not, though, he has ended up lying on his back (below).



LEX LUGER vs. ARN ANDERSON: If you can avoid his "torture rack," you have a chance to beat Lex Luger, but once you're up on his shoulders, it's tough to escape without submitting. Anderson, like many others, didn't.

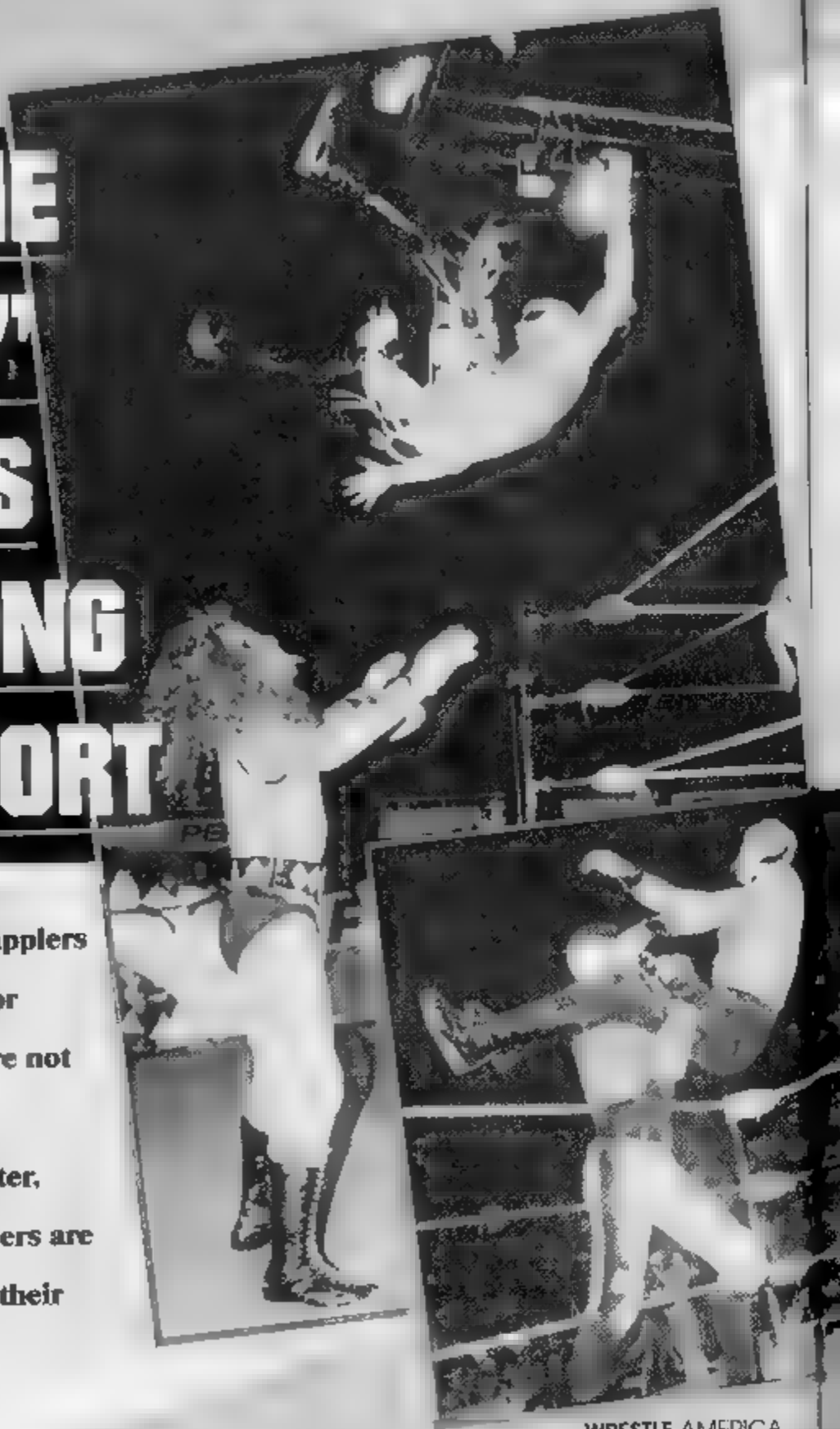


High-Flying And Death-Defying:

HOW THE "LUCHA" STYLE IS CHANGING OUR SPORT

Impact wrestlers are grapplers who make a difference or change the sport. They're not always heavyweights.

In fact, some of the lighter, Lucha Libre-style wrestlers are leading a revolution of their own right now



WRESTLE AMERICA

By Steve Anderson

ONLY TWO YEARS ago few fans in the United States knew anything about Mexican wrestlers such as Konnan, Super Calo, Juventud Guerrera, and Psicosis. Even Rey Mysterio Jr. was a mystery. Mexican wrestling? Sure, many knew about the existence of AAA and had maybe heard about EMLL, but probably only a few could name even one or two of the athletes who competed in those promotions.

These days, not a single *WCW Monday Nitro* goes by without at least one of them



Rey Mysterio Jr. and Psicosis were the first men to bring the Lucha Libre style of wrestling to ECW. Mysterio has so many amazing moves in his repertoire. They've helped him become WCW cruiserweight champion.

being featured prominently in a match. Mysterio holds the WCW cruiserweight title. All the WCW broadcasters recognize Konnan as the AAA Mexican heavyweight champion, and he has already had one reign as WCW U.S. champion. Calo, Guerrera and Psicosis have competed for those belts at Bashes, Starrcades, and other pay-per-views.

What's going on here?

The answer: Lucha Libre has arrived in the U.S., and it's going to hang around for a while.

To most North American fans, Lucha Libre is a style of wrestling made popular in

One of the more popular moves used by wrestlers who prefer the Lucha style is the "Frankensteiner." Here, Mysterio executes one on Perry Saturn, who at the time just happened to be on the shoulders of his own partner, John Kronus.

Mexico. To fans south of the border, Lucha Libre *is* wrestling. What it really is is a fast-paced, high-intensity, high-impact style of wrestling that features a lot of aerial moves. Lighter wrestlers tend to love it, and many of the Mexican athletes who use the





style wear colorful masks

For years save for a few diehards in the Southwest, very few fans in the States were aware of how different the exciting action going on south of the border was from what they were used to seeing. But that all changed a little more than a year ago, thanks in large part to ECW.

ECW fans are a finicky bunch. When Mexican star Rey Mysterio Jr. entered the promotion, most questioned his ability to adjust to the famed "extreme" style of ECW. The 140-pound Mysterio was entering a den of brawlers who significantly outweighed him, most by more than 100 pounds. But Mysterio didn't adjust

Just study the Mysterio-Psicosis feud if you want to know about the popularity of Lucha. Their rivalry began in Mexico, shifted to ECW, and has also continued in WCW. Fans everywhere love their exciting matches.

his style to fit in with ECW.

No, he brought the Lucha style to ECW.

In his first match, against Psicosis, he put on a display of moves, including numerous variations of the "Frankensteiner," that left the Philly crowd thirsting for more.

"I saw a few tapes of ECW when I was in Mexico," Mysterio recalled. "I knew I had to prove real fast that I belonged there. But at my size, I have always had to prove myself. I'm just glad it worked out so well."

ECW promoters took notice and signed additional Lucha stars including La Parka. Their impact on the promotion was significant. No longer were fans just lusty and chanting for blood. Mysterio, Konnan, Psicosis, and La Parka proved that you do not need chairs, barbed wire, or broken tables to give the fans entertaining matches. Lucha Libre changed ECW... for the better.

Soon WCW took notice, too. Senior Vice President Eric Bischoff saw how great these Mexicans were and how popular they were. Bischoff knew Mysterio and company would be perfect for his promotion's new cruiserweight division.

"I always say that if you're going to do something, do it right," said WCW Commissioner Nick Bockwinkel. "We knew where the quality cruiserweights were, so we sought them out and signed them."

First WCW lured Mysterio and Psicosis, then Guerrero and Calo. The cruiserweight division was booming. Lucha truly arrived.

THE LUCHA STYLE: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

If you haven't been watching Lucha Libre-style wrestling for very long, you're probably hearing some terms with which you're not all that familiar. A wrestler will execute a spectacular high-risk move and you'll hear one of the broadcasters refer to it by a name that sounds like some sort of tropical storm or exotic fish you might find in the jungles of South America. The following is a list of moves commonly used by wrestlers who favor the Lucha style and an explanation of how each is executed.

Tope: The wrestler executing his move will grab on to the top rope and swing over the ropes and onto his opponent with a cross bodyblock.

Plancha: To execute this, a wrestler will dive between the middle

and top ropes onto an opponent who is standing outside the ring.

Tope con helo: To execute this, a wrestler will run up the ropes, dive outside the ring and flip onto his shaken foe.

Plancha con helo: Same as a plancha, but the wrestler will also do a flip before crashing into his foe.

Shooting star press: A move that's also very popular in Japan. Facing the middle of the ring, the wrestler will leap high into the air, do a complete somersault, and land across the chest of his fallen opponent. Marc Mero calls this move his "Wild Thing."

Rana: Very similar to the victory roll.

Hurancanrana: This is actually a great counter move. It is usually used by a wrestler who is about to be

power bombed. Just before he is driven into the mat, he can hook his legs around the other wrestler's shoulders and neck and roll him over and onto the mat. If done right, it looks like a "Frankenstein."

Pescado: It's similar to the plancha, except to execute this move correctly, a wrestler must hurdle the top rope and use a cross-bodyblock on his opponent.

La Tapatia: Similar to the "surfboard" submission hold used by many American wrestlers, except the wrestler being victimized is lifted high into the air.

Caballo: Another name for the "camel clutch" made popular in America by The Iron Sheik in the U.S., this hold was actually first perfected by Gory Guerrero.

—Dave Lenker



when Misterio defeated Dean Matenko for the cruiserweight

Judging from the goings-on at some of the recent Nitros and WCW pay-per-views, Lucha has not only arrived, it is establishing deep roots. Fall Brawl may have boasted a WCW vs. NWO cage match main event, but two prominent matches featured Mexican stars. Konnan defeated Guerrero, and Misterio defeated Calo. The Lucha-style stars were glad the "War Games" match was contested in a double-ring, because they got to use that setup, too.

"I'll admit that it was a bit of an adjustment," Super Calo said.

Every wrestler who has mastered the Lucha style knows how to throw drop-kicks, spinning kicks, savate kicks, and practically every other type of kick there is. Here, Misterio is felled by one from Juventud Guerrera.



through an interpreter. But for me, more ring space and ropes provided more ammunition I loved it."

The more WCW shows Lucha-style matches on TV, the more people who will see it. And if more people see it, it will become more and more popular. And as it becomes more and more popular, more up-and-coming wrestlers will adopt it.

How long before the WWF starts featuring

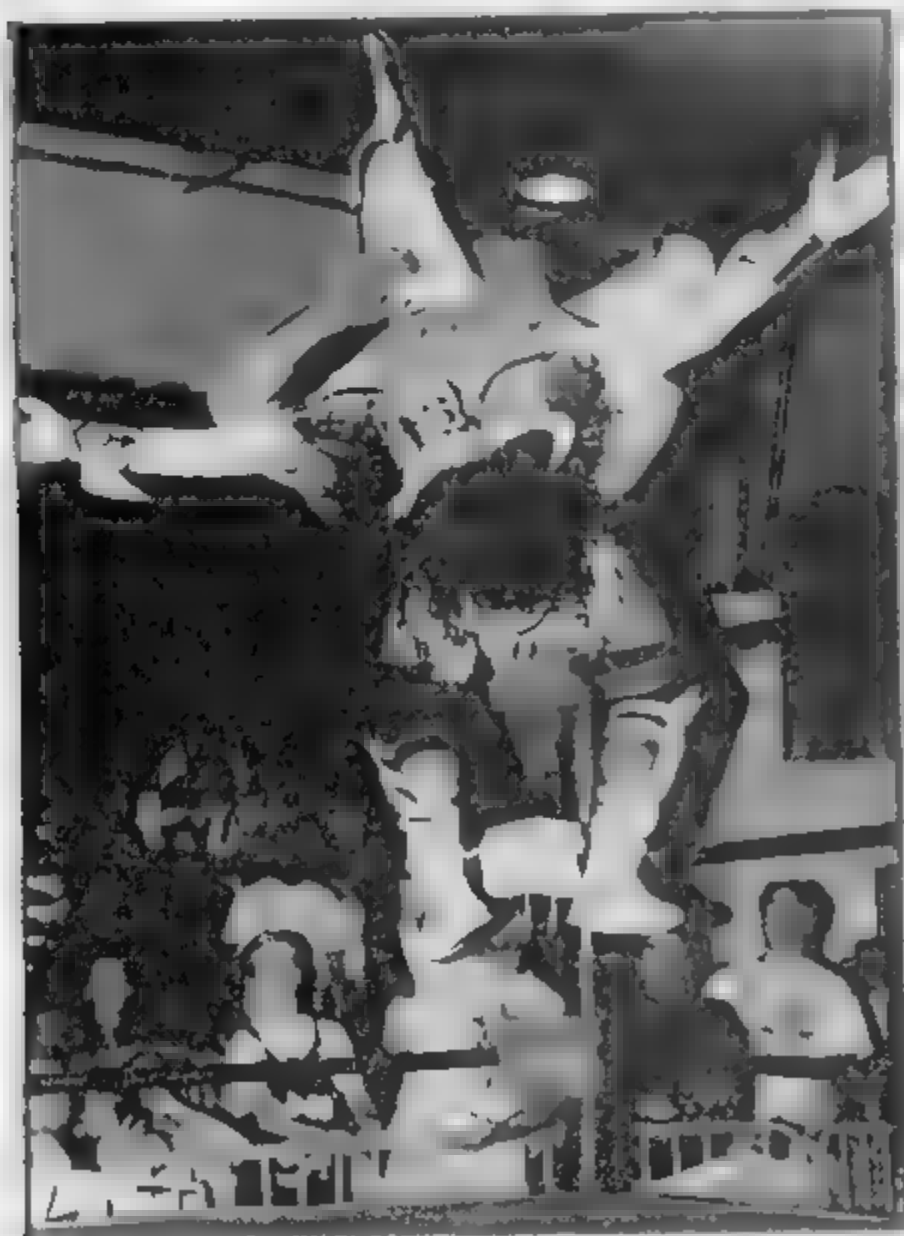
some Lucha-style wrestling?

Okay, so fans and promoters tend to have short memories. What is popular one day could be the scourge of wrestling a few months later. But you can be certain wrestlers like Misterio, Calo, and Guerrero will do their best to make sure Lucha remains popular in the U.S. and Mexico as long as they're around.

"It makes me feel very proud that all the people in the United States have accepted me and appreciate my style," said Misterio, who was ranked number seven in the 1996 "PWf 500." "I know that not every wrestler can use the style that I use and some of the others in AAA use, but I think it is the best and most exciting style in the world."

The Mexican invasion that began a few years ago figures to continue for some time. It's one invasion that everyone seems to be enjoying.

You know that every Lucha match you see will feature plenty of high-risk moves such as an over-the-top-ropes dive (top left) and a belly-to-back suplex off the ropes (left).



WCW Data Bank

HEIGHT: 7'4"

WEIGHT: 450

HOMETOWN: Parts unknown

MAJOR TITLES HELD: WCW

World heavyweight (1996)

BIGGEST STRENGTHS: Size

and underrated agility

BIGGEST WEAKNESS:

Overconfidence

FAVORITE MANEUVER:

Choke-slam

CLOSEST ALLY:

The entire NWO

MOST HATED OPPONENT:

Randy Savage

BIGGEST MATCH: Beat Ric

Flair for WCW World

heavyweight title, April 22, 1996

IMMEDIATE GOAL: Help to

make the NWO even stronger

and more dominant than it

already is

LONG-RANGE GOAL:

To become one of America's top

movie stars

HE SAID IT: "Joining the NWO

was the best decision I've ever

made. Me and my friend

"Hollywood" Hulk Hogan make a

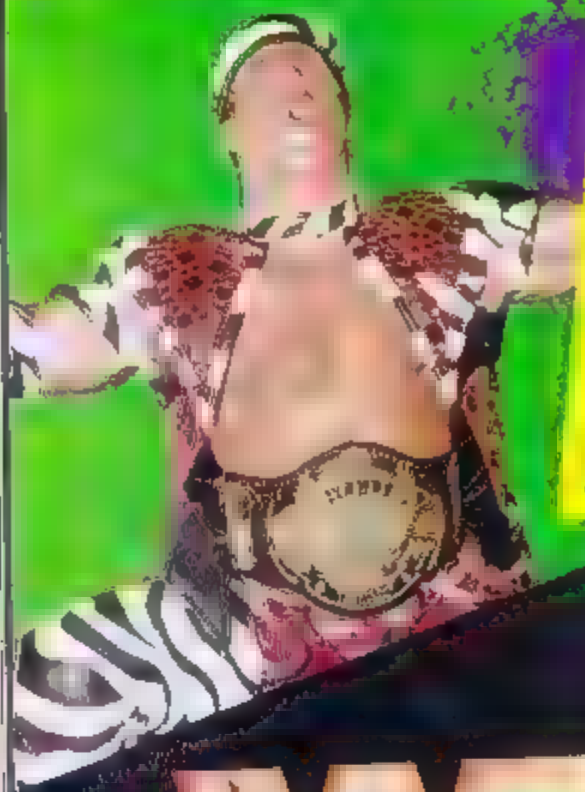
real good team, don't you think?"



THE GIANT



**A Giant
Weapon For the NWO... And A
Giant Headache for Sting**

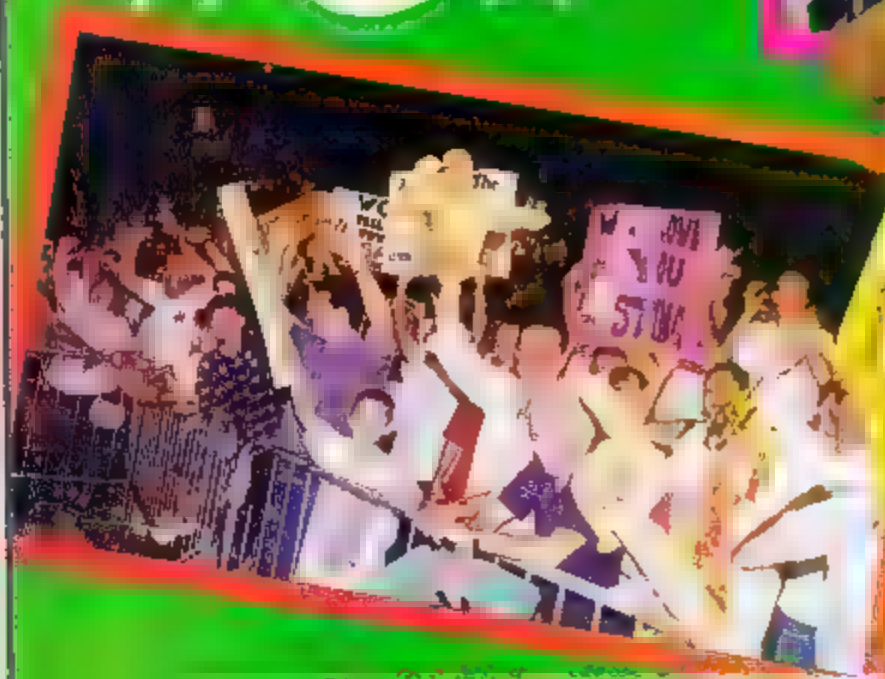


WWE



WWE

WWE



Contents

SPECIAL

REPORT

THE WWF-WCW WAR Looking Back . . . And Wondering What's Ahead

Two pages in *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* every month just wasn't enough. That's what we decided at one of our editorial meetings this fall. We devote two pages of every issue of *PWI* to the latest goings-on in the WWF-WCW war, but now that it has been more than a year since *Nitro* went on the air and more than a year since this war really started to heat up, we felt like it was time to put this whole thing in perspective.

What you see on the following 23 pages is our attempt to do that. First, we look back and see how this war began ... way back in the 1980s. To gain a complete understanding of what is happening in the war now, you need to know exactly what has gone on in the past. We've given you a comprehensive look at that as well as several other features relevant to the WCW-WWF war. But perhaps the most important part of this section begins on page 56, where Senior Writer Steve Anderson gives you an idea of exactly where this war might be headed.

As we've said before, this is probably the most important feud in wrestling history.

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Of Course, You Know,
This Means WAR!!!

WWE

VS.

WCW



A CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

With all the attention being paid to the Monday night wrestling wars, it would seem that the battle between the World Wrestling Federation and World Championship Wrestling began in 1995 when WCW debuted *Monday Nitro* against the WWF's *Monday Night Raw*.

However, the beginning of this war can actually be traced back 13 years earlier, when *World Championship Wrestling* was merely the name of a TV show aired by a promotion called Georgia Championship Wrestling under the jurisdiction of the National Wrestling Alliance.

In 1983, two promotions were receiving national exposure through cable television.

One was Georgia Championship Wrestling, whose *World Championship Wrestling* program on WTBS was consistently one of the highest rated programs on cable-TV. The other was the independent promotion Southwest Championship Wrestling, which aired on USA network.

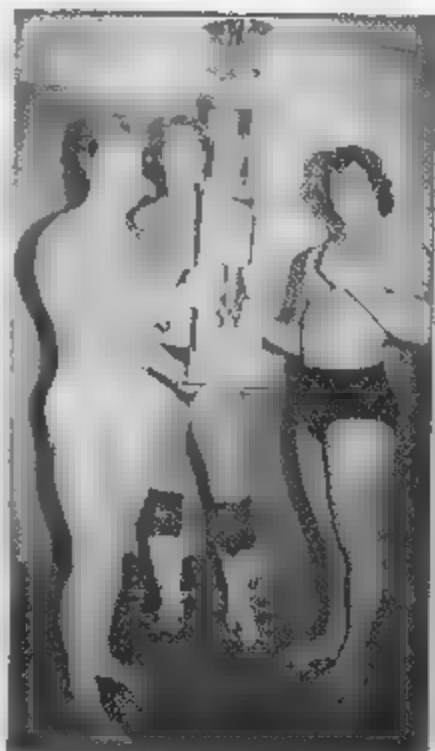
The San Antonio-based promotion, run by Joe Blanchard, was considered an "outlaw" promotion, as it promoted in regions where NWA promoters were already established.

Georgia Championship Wrestling intended to expand nationally and began promoting shows in Michigan,

West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio; the latter two areas were considered part of the WWF's Northeast territory. In an effort to gain force for its national expansion plans, GCW began a symbiotic relationship with Southwest Championship Wrestling. With the two promotions dominating national cable exposure, it appeared that together they would change the face of wrestling.

If GCW and SCW were going to fail in their bid to become a national power, then most industry observers felt NWA member World Class Championship Wrestling would be the most likely second choice. WCCW started syndicating its slick television program nationally in 1982, and the highly rated program was the best produced wrestling television show of its time. Riding on the popularity of the Von Erich brothers, it appeared destined for long-term success. However, several tragic events, the declining Texas economy, and some poor business decisions prevented WCCW from becoming a national force.

What WCW, SCW and WCCW could not have foreseen was that the WWF was formulating national expansion plans of its own and would soon begin taking aggressive and unprecedented steps toward becoming the greatest wrestling force in the history of the sport.

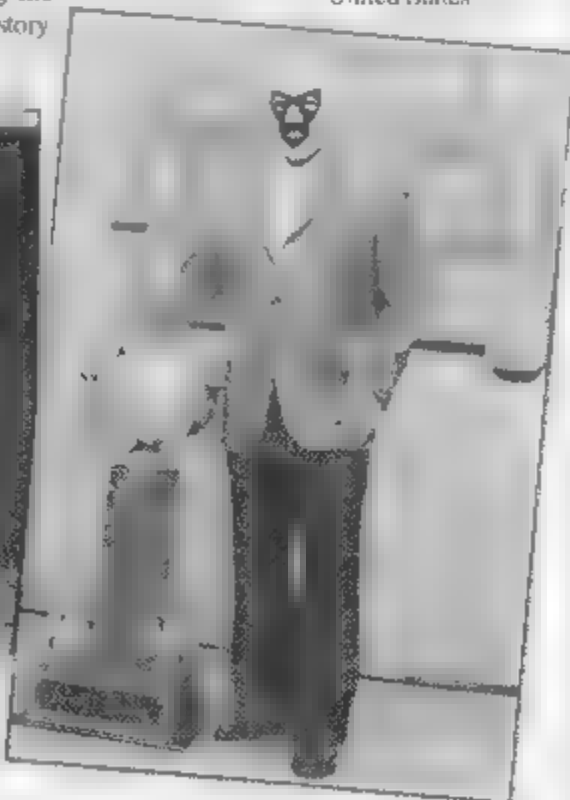


Many expected World Class Championship Wrestling to become a strong national promotion by the mid- or late-1980s, but the series of tragedies that struck the Von Erich family prevented that from happening.

What follows is a chronology of the major events in the battle for the pride, glory, and money that comes with being the number-one promotion in the United States.



In 1983, Georgia Championship Wrestling, whose top star was Mr. Wrestling II (right), tried to work together with Southwest Championship Wrestling, a promotion run by Joe Blanchard (above). The two promotions never made a serious impact nationally.



1982

June 6: Vince McMahon Jr. buys out Vince McMahon Sr.'s stock in the WWF, incorporating under the name TitanSports.

the NWA World title from Harley Race draws 15,500 fans to the arena and another 40,000 at closed-circuit TV locations in several states.

Ironically, Hulk Hogan had originally planned to appear on the card even before signing with the WWF, but had a prior commitment in Japan that he could not break.

1983

September: The WWF, whose monthly Madison Square Garden shows have been airing on USA Network, negotiates a deal with USA to have its *All-American Wrestling* replace the *Southwest Championship Wrestling* program.

McMahon doesn't reveal his inten-

1984

January 23: Hulk Hogan defeats the Iron Sheik for the WWF title.

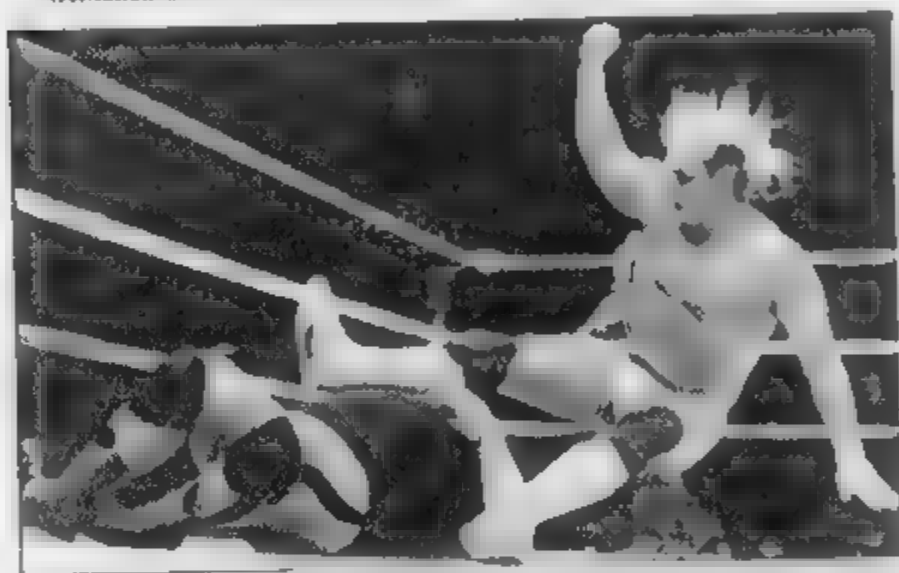
April: The WWF gets a two-hour Tuesday night slot on USA Network. The program, called *Tuesday Night*

Titans, combines wrestling and zany studio talk-show segments.

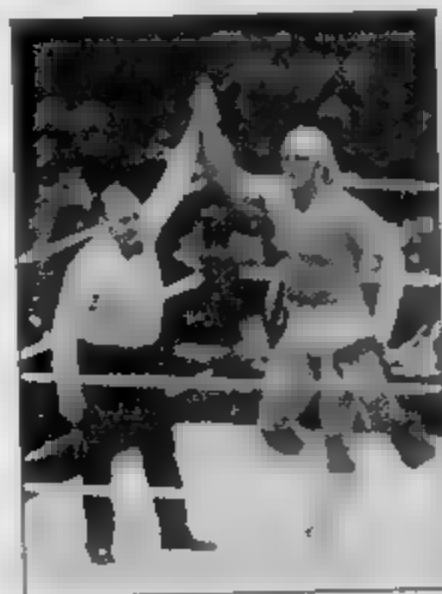
A consistent ratings winner in its first year, the program would be canceled in mid-1986.

May 27: Vince McMahon Sr. dies.

May: The WWF signs rock singer Cyndi Lauper and actor Mr. T. The so-called "Rock 'n' Wrestling" connection brings unprecedented mainstream press.



Hulk Hogan was a strong drawing card in the AWA in 1983 (above) ... until Vince McMahon lured him away to the WWF later that year. In January 1984, "Hulkamania" was born (below).



tions of national expansion, and even shows footage of wrestlers who are working for other promotions, including Ric Flair, the Von Erichs, Magnum T.A., Greg Valentine, Junkyard Dog, and Rick Steamboat.

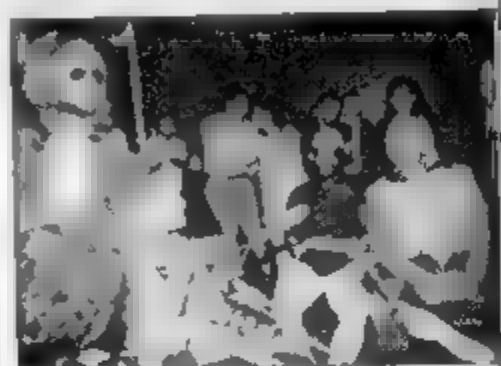
September 29: The WWF makes its first challenge to the now-defunct American Wrestling Association, promoting a card in San Jose, California.

November: Hulk Hogan, at the time the biggest attraction in the AWA, signs with the WWF.

Other key acquisitions soon would follow, including Bobby Heenan, Gene Okerlund, Roddy Piper, Paul Orndorff, and David Schultz.

November 24: Mid Atlantic Wrestling, an NWA affiliate promoted by Jim Crockett, holds Starrcade in Greensboro, North Carolina.

The card, which sees Ric Flair regain



The WWF got all kinds of mainstream publicity during the days of the "Rock 'n' Wrestling" connection. Here, Cyndi Lauper attends a press conference with Hulk Hogan and Mr. T.

May 29: The first NWA wrestling card in the New York area in 20 years is promoted by Jim Crockett's Mid-Atlantic Wrestling at the Byrne Meadowlands Arena. Rick Steamboat vs. Ric Flair headlines.

July 14: "Black Saturday." Vince McMahon purchases Georgia Championship Wrestling Inc. With no advance notice to fans, *World Championship Wrestling* on WTBS now features McMahon and Georgia mainstay Freddie Miller introducing previously taped WWF matches.

The WWF is now broadcast nationally Saturdays and Sundays on WTBS, the USA Network, Madison Square Garden Cable, and 103 syndicated stations.

WTBS receives more than 200 complaints within the first 72 hours after the initial WWF broadcast and more than 500 within a week. Asked for a comment by the *Atlanta Constitution*, McMahon replied "We'll show those complainers the difference between a major league and minor league production, given time."

July 28: In response to the emotionally charged fans, WTBS runs the

first installment of *Championship Wrestling From Georgia* at 7:35 a.m. Eastern (4:30 a.m. Pacific). The show is hosted by Gordon Solie and Ole Anderson. Said a WTBS spokesman, "Ted [Turner] felt that Ole Anderson's group provided a good product for many years, that it was only fair that we keep them on."

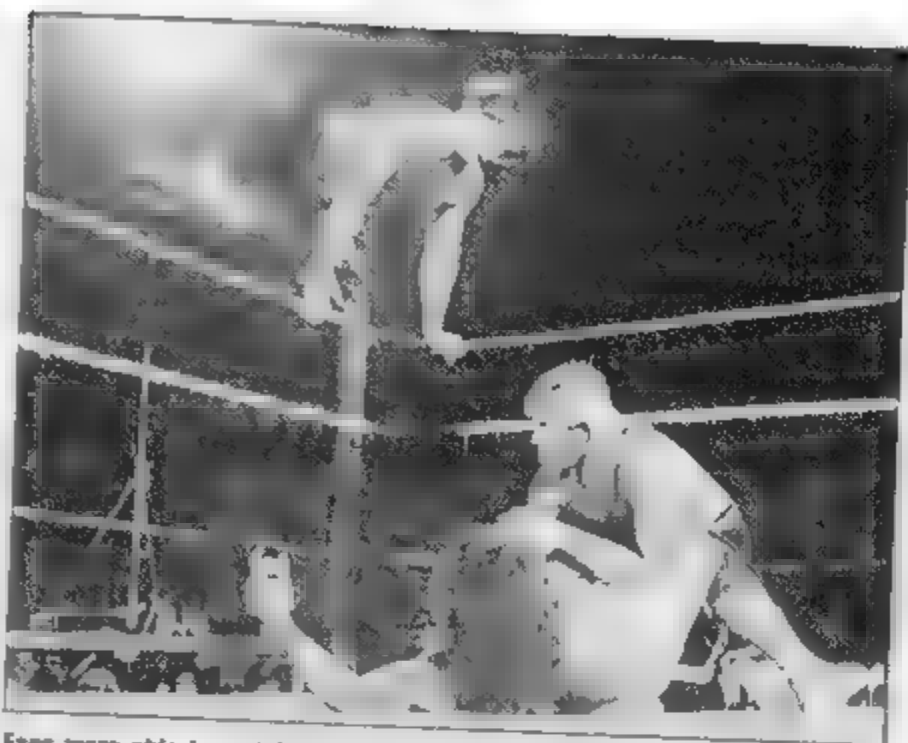
Still, the early time slot does not go over well with the fans.

August 18: *Championship Wrestling From Georgia* is switched to 9:05 Eastern.

September 25: Further evidence of McMahon's cross-promoting savvy is provided when Hulk Hogan appears as a guest VJ on MTV.

September 29: In an attempt to counter the WWF's expansion efforts, seven major promoters—including the AWA and Jim Crockett Promotions (Mid-Atlantic)—band together to form Pro Wrestling USA, which would broadcast matches on superstation WPIX out of New York.

Though Pro Wrestling USA would run shows in the WWF's Northeast territory and become the first wrestling program on ESPN, the company's disorganization would prevent it from becoming a success. By 1986, the AWA had alienated the other promoters, most importantly Jim Crockett, and the program eventually only showcased the painful decline of the AWA.



Fans were able to watch *The Rock 'n' Roll Express* on superstation WPIX in September of 1985 on *Pro Wrestling USA*. The show featured stars from the NWA, AWA, and other organizations.

1985

February 18: "The War To Settle The Score" is cablecast live on MTV.

The main event, pitting Roddy Piper against Hulk Hogan, is cut short when Cyndi Lauper and Mr. T interfere.

The event would lead to the WWF's first *WrestleMania*.

March 10: Bill Watts' Universal Wrestling Federation starts running on

WTBS on Sundays. During the show's 13 weeks on the air, it is the highest rated show on cable-TV.

March 31: The WWF holds *WrestleMania*, a wrestling supercard with celebrities overflowing, at Madison Square Garden. The card is headlined by Hogan and Mr. T against Piper and Orndorff. The event is viewed nationally on closed-circuit TV and pay-per-view in a few test markets.

April: Cash-starved and at odds with WTBS chairman Ted Turner, McMahon sells his time slot to Jim Crockett Promotions for a reported \$1-million.

Legend has it McMahon told Crockett, "You'll choke on that million."

Crockett would dub his program *World Championship Wrestling* and maneuver the UWF off WTBS.

May 11: Wrestling returns to network television after an absence of nearly three decades when NBC broadcasts the WWF's first *Saturday Night's Main Event*. The exposure would give the WWF a competitive edge for several years.

August 27: ESPN begins airing *Pro Wrestling USA*.



Bill Watts (shown negotiating with Dick Murdoch) had tremendous success with his UWF in the mid-1980s, especially when his TV show ran on WTBS.

1986

February: World Class Championship Wrestling secedes from the NWA due to disputes with Jim Crockett Promotions, the major player in the NWA.

As smaller promotions would close down, or were bought out by Jim Crockett Promotions, JCP would, for all intent and purpose, gain full control of the NWA. Ironically, as the NWA body contained fewer and fewer members, Crockett became the key player in an organization that was becoming less and less powerful.

February 7: WTBS airs *Superstars On The Superstation*, a live prime time wrestling special that preceded Clash of the Champions by two years.

March 1: The WWF keeps the "Rock 'n' Wrestling" connection going strong with the first Slammys special on MTV.

October 14: On the verge of superstardom, Magnum T.A. crashes his Poroshe into a utility pole in Charlotte, North Carolina, ending his wrestling career.

The loss of a star of Magnum's caliber was considered a major blow to Jim Crockett Promotions.

1987

March 29: WrestleMania III from the Pontiac Silverdome near Detroit sets an indoor attendance record of 93,173. The gate is approximately \$1.6-million.

Headlined by Hogan vs. Andre the Giant, the show-stealer is Rick Steamboat vs. Randy Savage, considered one of the best WWF matches of the '80s.

April 9: Jim Crockett Promotions purchases the UWF for \$4-million. This acquisition provides Crockett with several UWF wrestlers and the UWF's strong national syndication package.

Though this could have been a boon for JCP, financial problems were beginning to set in for the company.

Bill Watts would eventually only receive \$1.2-million for the UWF, and the UWF would eventually be absorbed into the NWA.

November 26: The WWF runs its inaugural Survivor Series pay-per-view in direct competition with the NWA's Starrcade, forcing PPV distributors to choose between the two supercards.

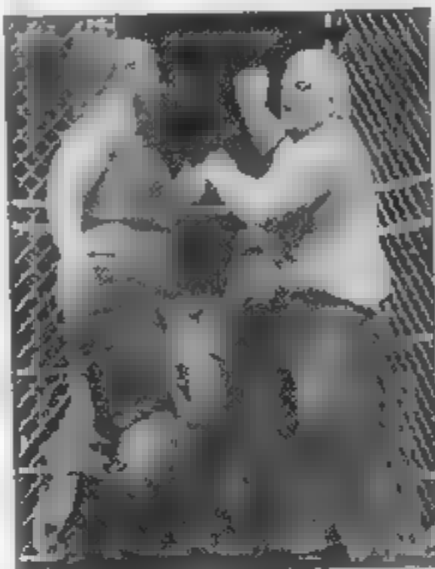
As the WWF had a proven history in PPV and the NWA did not, an

overwhelming majority would choose the WWF.

Starrcade was only aired on a few cable systems and the WWF succeeded in taking away the Thanksgiving tradition from the NWA.

1988

January 24: The NWA promotes the Bunkhouse Stampede pay-per-view. In direct competition on free television the WWF runs its first Royal Rumble.



The first Bunkhouse Stampede pay-per-view aired in January 1988. Fans were forced to choose between watching that and the WWF's Royal Rumble, which aired on free TV at the same time.

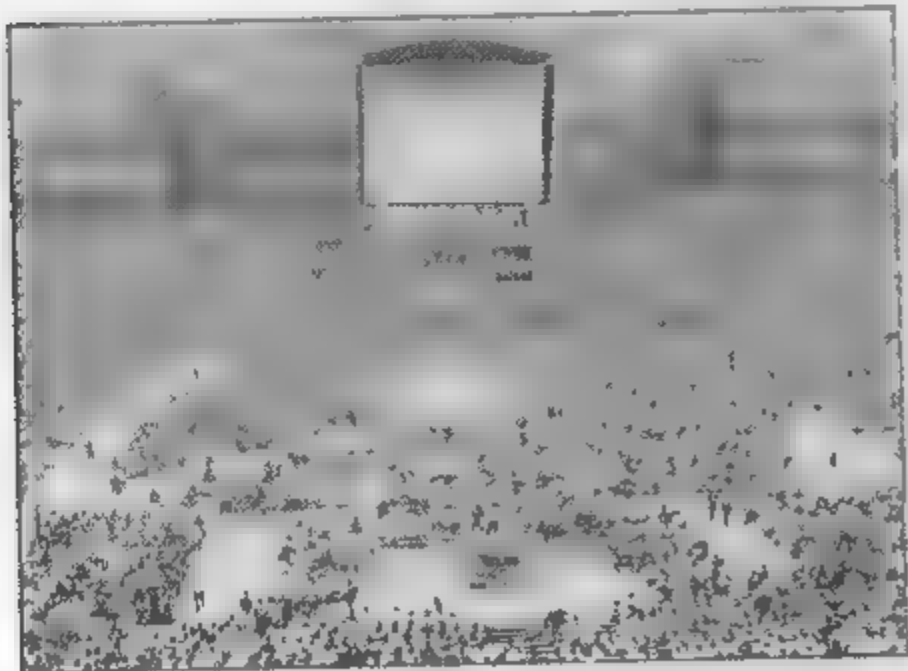
This marked the first time a PPV would be opposed by a free wrestling event on cable-TV, angering cable operators across the nation.

February 5: After a 33-year absence, wrestling returns to prime time network television with the WWF's *Main Event* program. Andre the Giant defeats Hulk Hogan for the World Title in front of a national audience of 33 million.

March 27: In retaliation for the WWF's Royal Rumble maneuver, the NWA airs the first Clash of the Champions free on WTBS opposite WrestleMania IV.

The counterprogramming is believed to have cost the WWF between \$2-million and \$4-million in revenues.

September: In an attempt at cross-promotion, Jim Crockett has his



An indoor attendance record for wrestling was set during WrestleMania III in Pontiac, Michigan, in 1987. More than 93,000 fans showed up.

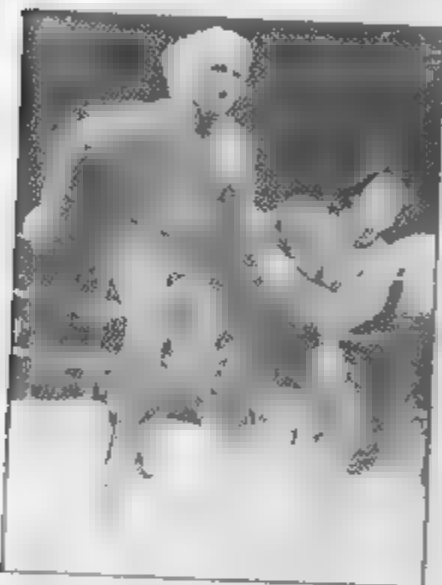
wrestlers make guest appearances on the syndicated television program *Learning The Ropes*, starring Lyle Alzado. The program is a critical and ratings disaster.

November: The financially troubled Jim Crockett Promotions, cornerstone of the NWA, is sold to Turner Broadcasting System.

Turner renames the promotion World Championship Wrestling.

1989

February 20: The WWF runs a free TV special on USA network opposite WCW's *Chi-Town Heat* pay-per-view.



One of the greatest matches of the 1980s saw Rick Steamboat beat Ric Flair for the NWA/WCW title at the *Chi-Town Heat* PPV in 1988. Again, the WWF ran a show on free TV directly opposite it.

Chi-Town Heat is highlighted by Rick Steamboat defeating Ric Flair for the combined WCW/NWA title in the first of a series of matches that would set the standard of wrestling excellence for the next several years.

April 1: In order to present a bigger image on television, and to look like a more formidable competitor to the WWF, WCW stops using the Techwood Drive studios for wrestling matches.

Studio wrestling matches had been a tradition in Atlanta since 1951.

April 2: WCW airs another *Clash of the Champions* opposite *WrestleMania V*.

The *Clash* contains a 55-minute bout

between Flair and Steamboat that is considered to be the Match of the Decade.

Oddly enough, the WWF actually caused the free special to take place. Cable operators asked Turner if he would run a pay-per-view show opposite *WrestleMania* when the WWF demanded a higher percentage of pay-per-view profits. Turner agreed and the WWF backed down. Cable operators decided to carry *WrestleMania*, and Turner, who had already booked a special, aired it for free on WTBS.

June: WCW debuts the *Power Hour* on Friday Nights during prime time on WTBS. Originally an action-packed program, it would turn into typical run-of-the-mill fare and eventually be relegated to Saturday mornings.

July 23: WCW has its biggest success with the Great American Bash pay-per-view in Baltimore, headlined by Ric Flair vs. Terry Funk.

August: WCW fails to come to terms with Rick Steamboat.

The inability or refusal of the promotion to maintain the services of the coveted performer is seen as a sign that the company has severe management problems that would become more and more evident over the next few years.

November 15: WCW's *Clash of the Champions IX* boasts the second most watched cable-TV wrestling match when Ric Flair defeats Terry Funk in the legendary "I Quit" match.

Even though Funk is a consistent performer and good commentator, WCW would do little to retain his services, and the Texan would leave the promotion in early-1990.

1990

May: Five WCW wrestlers appear on *Family Feud*.

Though they received national exposure, their behavior, particularly Sting's, does little to endear them to the audience.

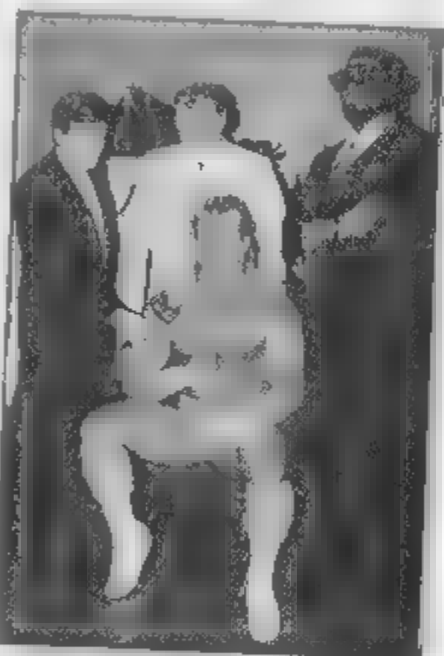
November: The competition between the WWF and WCW for viewers results in television saturation during Thanksgiving week: Two *Survivor Series* Showdowns specials, a *Clash of the Champions*, the

Survivor Series, and a *Saturday Night's Main Event* all air in one week. None of the programs experience the success of previous offerings.

1991

March 25: Spotlights in a *Sports Illustrated* feature story, Vince McMahon says of Ted Turner: "Ted has trouble with the wrestling genre. This is a highly specialized product—unique—requiring skills not available in normal marketing situations. Our competition is not from Ted, it is from the National Basketball Association from big rock concerts, from Disney."

July: A contract dispute with WCW management leads to the depart-



Shortly after the NWA and WCW titles were separated in 1991, Lex Luger defeated Barry Windham in a tournament final for the WCW belt. Here, Luger is interviewed by Eric Bischoff as Harley Race and Mr. Hughes look on.

ture of Ric Flair, the man most identified with the NWA and WCW, while he is still World champion. Flair is stripped of the WCW belt, but the NWA Board of Directors, which still has control of the NWA name, takes its first significant action in years, opting to maintain its recognition of Flair as champion.

This causes the separation of the WCW and NWA titles.

July 14: Lex Luger beats Barry

Windham for the vacant WCW World title

The NWA title would be vacant until Masa Chono was crowned the winner of a tournament on August 12, 1992

September: Ric Flair signs with the WWF. He brings his belt with him and claims to be "world champion."

Flair is stripped of the NWA title.

October 23: The WWF achieves the coup of being the first promotion to showcase the dream match of the '80s: Ric Flair vs. Hulk Hogan. Flair wins by count-out.

1992

January 19: Ric Flair becomes the second man to win both the NWA/WCW and WWF titles when he wins the 30-man Royal Rumble



Ric Flair was an NWA mainstay for most of his career, but he joined the WWF in August of 1992. Two months later, we saw the first Flair-Hogan match.

March: Problems arise in the WWF when sexual misconduct allegations involving top-ranking employees gain national media attention

These charges cause McMahon to focus on issues other than wrestling, which will become a familiar state of being over the next two years.

April 4: WWF Body Stars TitanSports' new weekly bodybuilding program, debuts on USA. The show features former WCW World

champion Lex Luger

McMahon brashly takes on multi-millionaire publisher and bodybuilding promoter Joe Weider, attempting to sign away the top stars in the sport

July 16: Shortly after George Zahorian, a former ringside physician for the WWF, is convicted of selling anabolic steroids to four pro wrestlers, the WWF announces that its wrestlers will undergo mandatory steroid testing.

1993

January 11: The WWF debuts *Monday Night Raw* on USA Network, replacing *WWF Prime Time Wrestling*.

The new show would be a ratings winner, regularly placing among the top 15 cable programs

February 21: After an 18-month absence, Ric Flair returns to WCW

June 13: Hulk Hogan wrestles his last match for the WWF, ending a very lucrative association that lasted almost 10 years.

September: Eric Bischoff is promoted to the position of WCW senior vice president, promising to do what his three predecessors, Jim Herd, Kip Frey, and Bill Watts could not do for Turner: give McMahon a real fight

November 18: Vince McMahon is indicted by a federal grand jury, bringing the issue of wrestlers using steroids out in the open

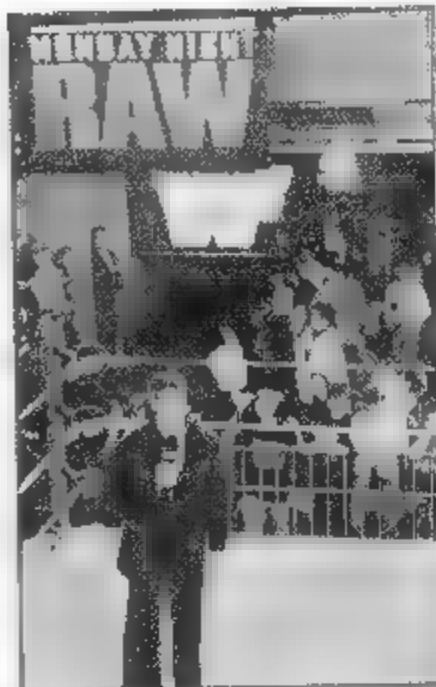
It also was a factor in the WWF's business slide, which in turn allows WCW to close the gap between the two companies.

McMahon was later found not guilty on all counts.

1994

February 28: With his non-compete clause expired, former NWA guru Jim Crockett holds a taping in New York for a venture called the World Wide Wrestling Network

Despite formerly being a major player in the NWA vs. WWF wars, Crockett's new venture would soon fold



WWF Monday Night Raw first began airing on the USA Network in January 1993. It quickly became a ratings success.

June 11: Hulk Hogan, still the world's most recognizable wrestler, debuts for WCW amid much fanfare.

July 17: Hogan defeats Ric Flair for the WCW World title in Orlando, Florida

December 3: Long-time WWF superstar Randy Savage jumps to WCW

This would mark the first of several jumps between the two promotions and escalate into a bidding war for talent



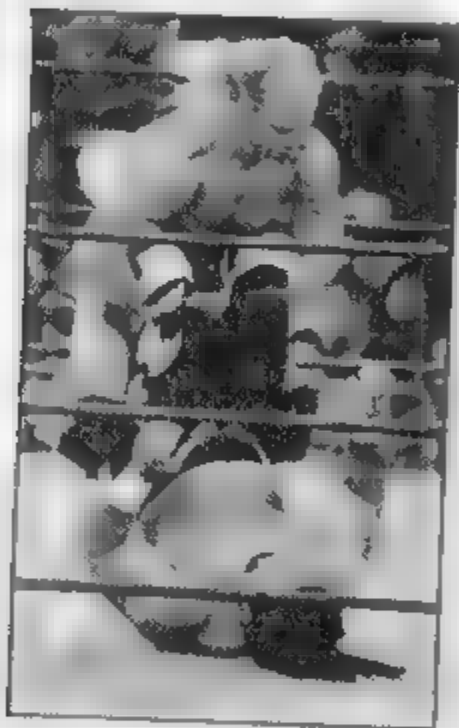
Hulk Hogan made his WCW debut in the spring of 1994. At the time, most people in that organization were glad to have him.

1995

June 5: Eric Bischoff meets with Ted Turner, who agrees to air a live WCW weekly program on TNT opposite the WWF's *Monday Night Raw*.

September 4: WCW debuts *Monday Nitro* live from Bloomington, Minnesota. Top WWF star Lex Luger shocks the wrestling world as he appears on the program and speaks derisively about the WWF.

September 11: Showing that he is willing to say or do anything to win the ratings battle, Eric Bischoff tells WCW viewers who will win a match on the pre-taped *Monday Night Raw* program airing opposite *Monday Nitro*.



What a coup for the first edition of *WCW Monday Nitro*. WCW got Lex Luger to appear on the show just one night after his last WWF match.

The WWF counters by hiring actors to parody the goings-on in the WCW board room with such characters as "Billionaire Ted," "The Hulkster," and "The Nacho Man."

Bischoff would later convince TNT to start the program at 8.57 p.m. in hopes of getting viewers to tune in to *Nitro* before *Monday Night Raw* begins.

September 25: Time Warner Inc. enters the wrestling war by announc-

ing it will purchase TBS and all of its holdings, including WCW, to make it the largest media conglomerate in the world in 1996.

December 18: Alundra Blayze, formerly and currently known as Madusa, appears on *WCW Monday Nitro*, and throws her WWF World Women's title belt in the garbage.

1996

February 8: The WWF files a formal complaint with the FTC, charging that TBS "has been engaged in a systematic plan, implemented by a series of steps, to destroy the WWF in order that TBS might achieve a monopoly over the professional wrestling business."

Determined to do what he can to block the Turner-Time Warner merger, McMahon follows up by placing an ad in the *New York Times* that reads "Attention: TBS Stockholders. Does Ted Turner have a personal vendetta against the World Wrestling Federation? Time Warner Beware."

May: In one of the strangest gaffs in wrestling contract negotiations, the WWF is able to sign WCW fixture Brian Pillman.

WCW had Pillman under contract, then fired him while trying to negotiate a new contract with him.

May 27: Scott Hall, formerly the WWF's Razor Ramon, appears on *Nitro*'s first expanded two-hour broadcast.

June 10: Kevin Nash, formerly the WWF's Diesel, appears on *Nitro*.

June 20: The WWF files suit against WCW for unfair competition and trademark infringement, charging that WCW was attempting to mislead viewers into believing Hall and Nash were representatives of the WWF and that WCW was using the WWF's trademarked characters.

July 7: Hulk Hogan stuns the wrestling world when he verbally trashes WCW, the WWF, his former allies, and his fans at Bash at the

Beach. He announces that he is joining Hall and Nash in the New World Order.

August: *Monday Nitro* overtakes *Monday Night Raw* for the first time in the overall, face-to-face, Nielsen ratings battle.

September 6: WWF broadcaster Jim Ross announces that Diesel and Razor Ramon would be returning to the WWF.

After some initial confusion, it would soon be learned that the wrestlers to which Ross referred were not Kevin



Just a few weeks after finishing up in the WWF, Scott Hall and Kevin Nash invaded WCW. Soon thereafter, the New World Order was formed.

Nash and Scott Hall, just two men using the trademarked character names.

September: The WWF hires Neville Meyer to serve as co-chief executive officer along with Vince McMahon's wife, Linda, but loses the services of front office executive JJ Dillon, the former manager of The Four Horsemen, who resigns without notice and goes to work for WCW.

September 29: Having cut costs by trimming the bulk of its syndicated TV outlets, the WWF sees the paid attendance for a Madison Square Garden card dip below the 4,000 mark. □

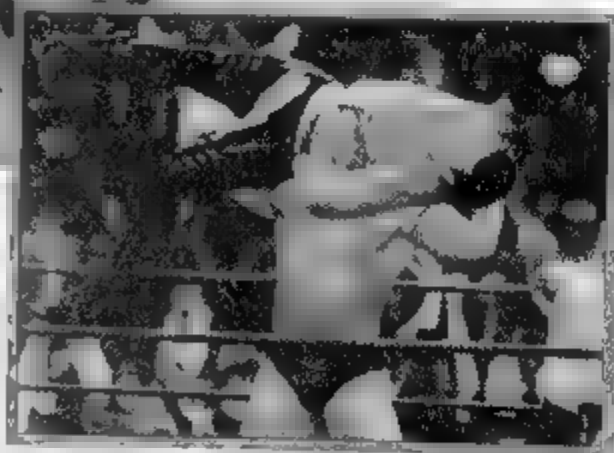
Was It Worth It?

EVALUATING THE WRESTLERS WHO MADE THE JUMP

With the WWF and WCW locked in such a bitter war right now, every time a wrestler jumps from one federation to the other, it's big news. But jumping from the WWF to WCW or vice versa doesn't always turn out to be a good move for the wrestler who does it. On these two pages, we've focused on the wrestlers who have switched federations since the summer of 1995, when this war really began to heat up. We've given each wrestler a grade for his or her performance since the big jump.



Lex Luger couldn't pin Yokozuna when it counted in the WWF (above), but he has been racking up victories (right) and winning belts since rejoining WCW.



LEX LUGER

After three title-free years in the WWF, Luger shocked the world by returning to WCW on Labor Day 1995, less than 24 hours after he wrestled his last WWF match. Although his latest tour of WCW didn't start out well (he lost to Hulk Hogan a week after returning), Lex soon secured not one, but two titles. He and Sting beat Harlem Heat for the World tag belts, and Luger maintained his momentum by defeating Marc Mero for the TV belt. Those belts may be gone now, but Luger remains a strong force in WCW.

A



Dustin Rhodes was successful and popular in WCW (left). Goldust has been successful and borderline vulgar in the WWF (below).



GOLDUST

So much has been written about Dustin Rhodes' bizarre metamorphosis into Goldust. But the controversial transformation has worked for him. As Goldust, he has captured two intercontinental titles and received numerous shots at the World title. Gold paint and a blond wig has been his formula for success in the WWF. Lately, Goldust has become even more violent and aggressive (dare we say masculine?). **B+**

MARK MERO

Mero's grade and stock went up when he defeated Faarooq for the vacant Intercontinental title in September. He had left WCW immediately after losing the TV belt, and during his first few months in the WWF had a difficult time winning pay-per-view matches. Many began to question his decision to leave WCW. But by securing the IC title, Mero has quieted those critics. **B+**

STEVE AUSTIN

"Stone-Cold" actually jumped from WCW to ECW to the WWF, but his stay in ECW was a short one. He was afraid of getting lost in the WCW shuffle and probably made the right move by jumping. Austin has looked better in the ring since he split with Ted DiBiase and ought to win a title within the next year. He must be doing something right because Vince McMahon recently called him the most talented wrestler in the world. **B+**

KEVIN NASH

As Diesel in the WWF, Nash had more than his share of the spotlight. He reigned proudly as WWF champ for one year. After losing the title, he turned to rulebreaking—a move that kept him in the forefront of promoters and fans' collective consciousness. Since jumping ship, he has served mostly as a 7' backdrop to Hogan. He's a force in the NWO, but he rarely wrestles. Unless he breaks out on his own, he will forever be just above average. **B**

SCOTT HALL

The Wrestler Formerly Known As Razor Ramon made a splash when he walked through the Nitro crowd and into the ring on Memorial Day. He was acting like a general declaring war on WCW. But the general soon became just another foot soldier for the four-star Hogan. Like Nash, Hall has traded WWF gold for a black NWO T-shirt. Returning to the moniker Scott Hall may have brought him back to his roots, but his Razor Ramon persona got him titles. **B-**

MADUSA

Madusa is one of the few ex WWFers to enter WCW and pledge allegiance to the promotion. But she didn't do so with class. Trashing her WWF Women's belt on Nitro was unnecessary and juvenile. And what did Madusa do shortly after returning to WCW? She got involved in a torrid but pointless feud with Col. Parker. She has wrestled impressively in some women's matches, but who noticed? She probably should have held on to that WWF belt. **D**

SIX, JEFF JARRETT, BRIAN PILLMAN

It doesn't look good for Six, who may turn out to be a glorified lackey for others in the NWO. We knew that he couldn't be a Kid forever, but a number? Jarrett may or may not be secretly dealing with the NWO. Pillman is a great wrestler, but no one knows how great he'll be after missing so much time with a very serious ankle injury. **INCOMPLETE**

THE WWF

Our Thoughts

Stu Saks (Publisher):

"At face value, it's quite obvious that WCW is winning its war with the WWF. WCW has the deeper talent roster and continues to import new, exciting athletes. Its ratings continue to rise, and its pay-per-view numbers are healthy. The WWF's TV syndication deals continue to erode, and the USA Network is getting a little antsy about the continual decline of *Monday Night Raw*'s Nielsen ratings. But as gloomy as the picture appears to be for the WWF, don't count them out just yet. The mere fact that the WWF is still very much in this war says a lot about the groundwork it laid over this past decade. The WWF is still the brand name most people associate with wrestling. If you were to read a newspaper account of an out-of-control sporting event in the newspaper, do you ever see the writer say, 'It seemed like WCW.' No, it's always the WWF that's mentioned. That may change, people no longer call refrigerators 'Frigidaire's, as they did in my grandparents' day, but for now the WWF is still synonymous with professional wrestling. And as long as that's the case, it will at least have a fighting chance. I don't think it's a stretch to say that after everything WCW has done to win the war over the past year, the mere fact that there is still a war to write about is a major plus for the WWF. Vince McMahon might not be making all the right moves to counter WCW, but he's not allowing himself to be a lamb led to slaughter, as so many of McMahon's victims did in the early-'80s. If Vince McMahon is really a genius, as so many people were quick to label him a decade ago, we're going to find out in the next year."



Bill Apter (Senior Editor):

"Competition makes everyone's product better. There was the WWF, going along unchallenged, ruling the business. Yes, WCW was there, but barely. Then with talent raids similar to what the WWF did in the '80s, WCW got into the ballgame. Hulk Hogan, Randy Savage, Kevin Nash, Scott Hall, and others gave WCW a pretty good batting order. Because of the moves WCW has made, especially in improving its TV lineup, the WWF is working harder to make its programs as interesting as possible. WCW is doing the same thing—trying to lure more fans away from the WWF. Both of them, I think, are making our great sport even more exciting to watch. Which ex-WWF star will show up in WCW next week? Who will the WWF bring in next? Let 'em keep us guessing. As to who will win this war? Neither side, I hope. I love it this way."

WCW WAR

Dave Lister (Editor-in-Chief):

"What worries me right now is that both the WWF and WCW seem to be forgetting about the fans as they get deeper and deeper into this war. Everything they do on Monday nights seems to be geared toward ratings. All the WCW broadcasters feel compelled to tell us that *Nitro* is the most watched wrestling show every week. Jim Ross gives us a new Diesel and Razor Ramon probably because he thinks that'll get people watching the WWF more. And the NWO seems to try to outdo everybody each and every Monday night. You look at the numbers and it appears WCW is winning this war, but now I'm not so sure this war is good for wrestling. It's getting very nasty."

Michael Martens (Managing Editor):

"It amazes me that the two promotions that should epitomize professionalism are sinking to such low levels for the sake of ratings. Granted, I did find humor in the 'Billionaire Ted' skits and continue to find humor in the NWO interviews, but what will the long-term effects on the sport be? Wrestling is changing, and this war is only complicating matters. Instead of wanting to see more WCW and WWF wrestling, a lot of the fans are getting frustrated because they are being forced to choose between the two promotions. The backlash to this is apparent already. The NWO is getting cheered. Today's fans are more appreciative of the high-flying maneuvers associated with the Lucha Libre style than a great ring entrance. I think more fans are becoming aware of some of the smaller promotions, too. In the future, more and more of them may be drawn away from the large arenas and into small bingo halls across the nation."

Dave Rosenbaum (Senior Writer):

"WCW is definitely winning this war, and *Nitro* is a more interesting show than *Raw* at least at this stage. If for no other reason than it's always live. But a lot of WCW's success in the ratings right now has to be attributed to the NWO. Sure, WCW has a lot of great wrestlers, but the main reason a lot of people tune in to *Nitro* is to see what the NWO will be up to. I know I've said it before, but it bears repeating: Hulk Hogan won't be around forever. It won't be long before he decides he doesn't need wrestling anymore. Can the NWO thrive without him? I'm not sure about that. Will WCW thrive without him, Fair, and Savage? I'm not convinced it will. When guys like that are gone, I think you'll see the WWF rise again."



WHO'S WINNING?

Our Readers Speak Out!

Every month in *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*, we take a look at the latest developments in the WWF-WCW war. But part of that two-page department is always devoted to the "Voice Of The Fans." What do you think about wrestling's hottest feud?

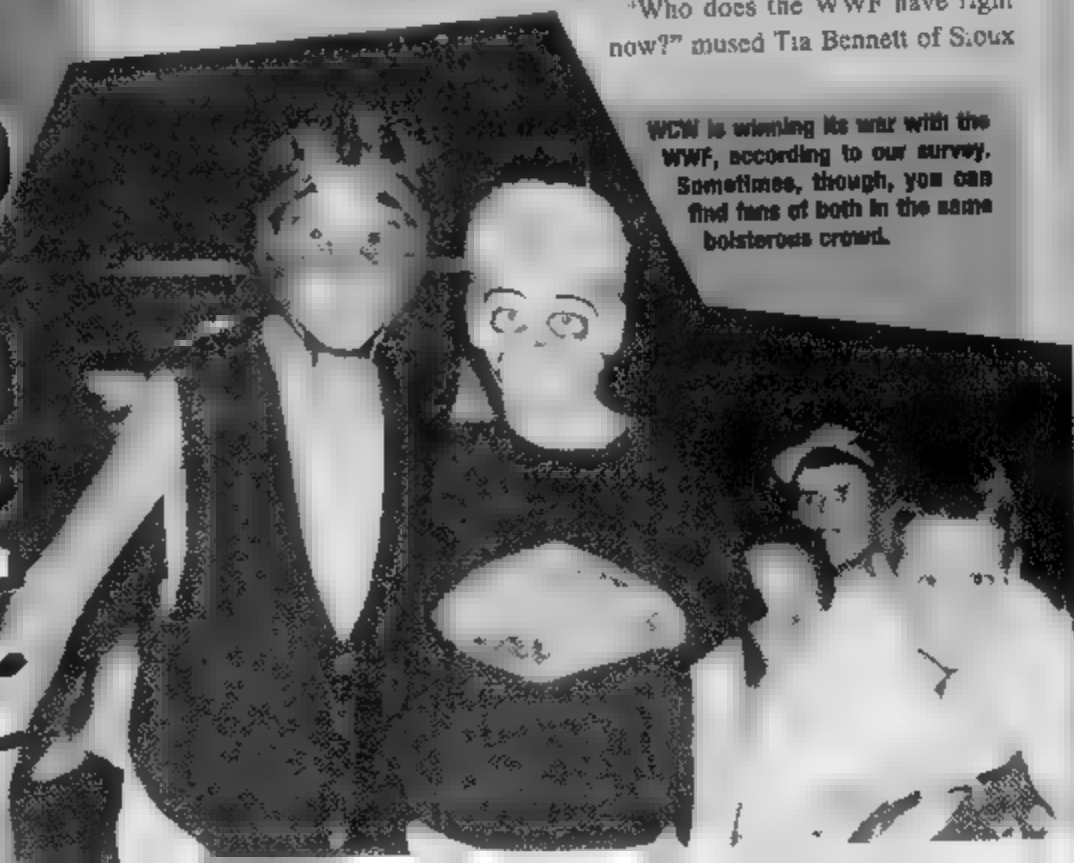
A lot of you have told us via mail over the past few months, but here we took the time to call more than 700 of our subscribers to find who they think is winning the war and why. Of the fans we surveyed, we found that 57 percent believed that WCW was winning, 40 percent believed the WWF was ahead, and three percent either weren't sure or thought it was too close to call. What follows are a few of the comments from some of those with whom we spoke.

"WCW is winning, hands down," said Peter Williams of Roanoke, Virginia. "There's absolutely no question in my mind. They've got almost all the top-level talent. Look at how many supergroups there are in WCW. WCW is also much richer in tradition and history. They have that on their side."

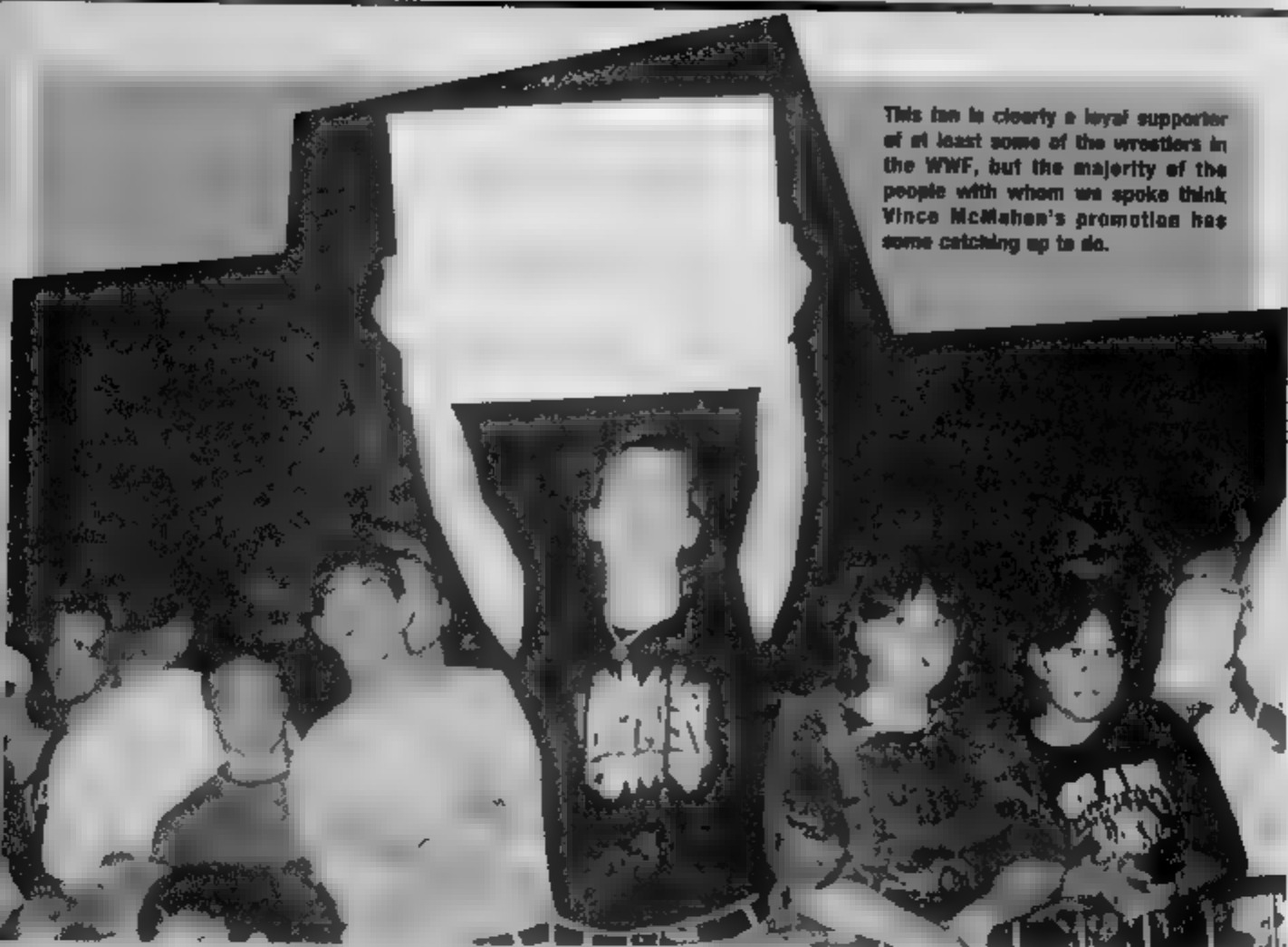
"The WWF has been and always will be number one," said Lori Benedict of Santa Monica, California. "The name 'WWF' is still synonymous with professional wrestling. I have friends who aren't wrestling fans, and whenever they hear me talk about wrestling, they still assume it's the WWF. The name 'WCW' doesn't mean anything to them. I think WCW is still second-best."

"Who does the WWF have right now?" mused Tia Bennett of Sioux

WCW is winning its war with the WWF, according to our survey. Sometimes, though, you can find fans of both in the same bolsterous crowd.



This fan is clearly a loyal supporter of at least some of the wrestlers in the WWF, but the majority of the people with whom we spoke think Vince McMahon's promotion has some catching up to do.



City, Iowa. "Shawn Michaels is still a light heavyweight in my book, and the best tag teams they have are Owen Hart and Davey Boy Smith The Smokin' Gunns, and The Godwinns?! That's a joke

"WCW is at a serious disadvantage," said Ken Monroe of Philadelphia. "They have to battle both the WWF and the NWO. That is too much for them to handle. I don't watch WCW, because I'm sick of seeing this NWO thing

The NWO would probably like us to believe that they are chipping away at WCW along with the WWF," said Stuart Ronsberg of West Allis, Wisconsin. "WCW is proving their strength and class every day by holding off a real promotion and a pseudo-promotion at the same time."

"WWF has better wrestlers, pure and simple," said John Moore of Portland, Oregon. "They may not be the biggest names, but they have

more talent. I'd rather see a star rising than a star on the decline. WCW may be ahead now, but that'll change in a few years. You watch

"You have to give Eric Bischoff credit," said Neil Mayer of Auburn, New York. "He's really turned WCW into a terrific promotion. I never miss *Nitro*."

Other fans, while willing to pick a winner, said they have grown sick of the war

"It takes away from the business at hand," said Roger Somers of Austin, Texas. "They should just focus on themselves and quit ripping on each other. That would make their wrestling even better than it is now."

I got sick of this war when the WWF was doing those 'Billionaire Ted' skits and Bischoff was giving out results of taped *Raw* cards," said Robert Stewart of Palmetto, Florida. "Frankly, I think McMahon and Bischoff both need to grow up."

And some of the fans who picked

neither" could not resist bringing up the names of other promotions

Overrated, overrated, overrated," said Steve Scherer of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. "Give me ECW. That's a promotion that cares about the fans, not just ratings, merchandise, and the almighty dollar."

"If other fans are tired of this like I am, they should look overseas," said Kris Palmer of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. "Wrestling in Japan, Mexico, and Europe is just that—wrestling. No flash and no petty wars."

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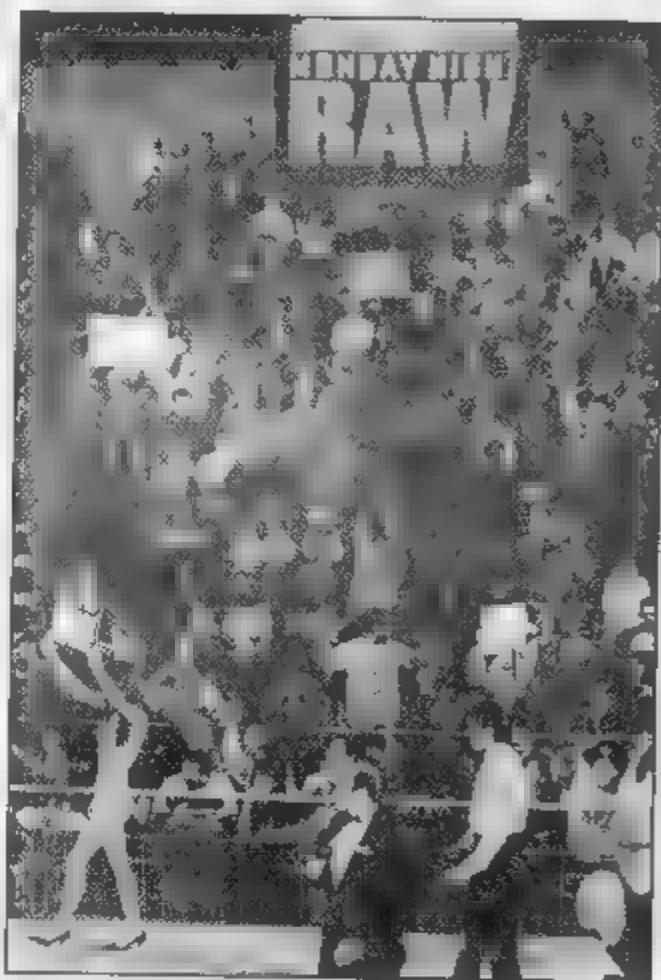
The most important thing we learned from doing this survey was that both the WWF and WCW should remember that their success and TV ratings are dependent upon the fans. Battle scars can run deep. But perhaps these wrestling battles should be confined to the ring and kept out of the corporate board rooms.

THE MONDAY NIGHT WARS



The very first NWA Monday Wars took place at Bloomington, Minnesota's Mall of America, and the first match saw Brian Pillman beat Justin Lipox (host).

Raw-Nitro Battle Keys The WWF-WCW Battle



WWF Monday Night Raw is only a live show about once a month, but it beat Nitro in the ratings pretty regularly during the latter part of last year.

WHEN WCW ANNOUNCED better than a year ago that it would be running a live wrestling show on TNT directly opposite the WWF's wildly successful *Monday Night Raw*, most fans and insiders felt it would be a huge mistake. At the very least, it was a huge gamble. Had the new *Monday Nitro* show not been able to hold its own in the battle of Nielsen ratings and WCW been forced to either move it to a new time slot or cancel the

RAW NITRO	Date	Rating	Viewers (mil.)	Main Event
RAW NITRO	9/4	2.9	1.94 mil.	Hogan-Rogers
RAW NITRO	9/11	2.2 2.5	1.50 mil. 1.67 mil.	Michaels-Sid Hogan-Luger
RAW NITRO	9/18	2.5 2.4	1.70 mil. 1.61 mil.	Ramon-Kid Flair-Pillman
RAW NITRO	9/25	2.7 1.9	1.84 mil. 1.27 mil.	Gunn-Owen/Yoko Savage-Sullivan
RAW NITRO	10/2	2.5 2.5	1.70 mil. 1.67 mil.	Ramon-Kid Flair-Arn
RAW NITRO	10/9	2.6 2.6	1.77 mil. 1.74 mil.	six-man tag Flair-Anderson
RAW NITRO	10/16	2.5 2.2	1.70 mil. 1.46 mil.	Bret-Yoko Flair/Sting- Pillman-Arn
RAW NITRO	10/23	2.6 2.2	1.77 mil. 1.46 mil.	battle royale Sting/Luger-Heat
RAW NITRO	10/30	2.2 2.5	1.50 mil. 1.67 mil.	Ramon-Owen Luger/Meng-Males
RAW NITRO	11/6	2.1 2.3	1.43 mil. 1.54 mil.	Lawler/Yankem- Bret/Hakushi Sting-Flair
RAW NITRO	11/13	2.6 2.0	1.77 mil. 1.34 mil.	Ramon-Sid Sting-Malenko
RAW NITRO	11/20	2.3 2.5	1.56 mil. 1.67 mil.	Michaels-Owen Hogan-Sting
RAW NITRO	11/27	2.5 2.3	1.77 mil. 1.54 mil.	Undertaker-Mo Sting/Luger- Pillman-Arn
RAW NITRO	12/4	2.4 2.6	1.63 mil. 1.74 mil.	Ramon-Douglas Luger-Savage
RAW NITRO	12/11	2.5 2.6	1.70 mil. 1.74 mil.	Bret Backlund Hogan/Sting- Flair-Arn
RAW NITRO	12/18	2.3 2.7	1.56 mil. 1.81 mil.	Ramon-Yoko Savage-Giant
RAW NITRO	12/25	no show 2.5		Savage-Flair
RAW NITRO	1/1	2.6 2.5	1.77 mil. 1.67 mil.	Raw Bowl Hogan-Flair
RAW NITRO	1/8	3.0 2.8	2.04 mil. 1.88 mil.	Bret-Bulldog (YH) Hogan/Savage- Flair-Arn
RAW NITRO	1/15	2.4 3.5	1.63 mil. 2.35 mil.	Undertaker-Yankem Flair-Sting

	Date	Rating	Households	Main Event
RAW NITRO	1/22 1/22	2.3 2	1.97 mil 1.81 mil	Bret-Goldust Savage-Flair
RAW NITRO	1/24 1/29	2.4 2.8	1.63 mil 1.88 mil	Michaels-Yoko Flair-Hogan
RAW NITRO	2/5 2/5	2.7 2.9	1.84 mil 1.94 mil	Bret-Undertaker Savage-Luger Warriors
RAW NITRO	2/2 2/2	no show 3.7	2.48 mil	Anderson-Hogan
RAW NITRO	2/19 2/19	3.1 2.9	2.11 mil 1.94 mil	Ramon-Goldust Flair-Savage
RAW NITRO	2/26 2/26	3.1 3.2	2.11 mil 2.14 mil	Yokozuna Bulldog-Owen Flair-Body Savage-Anderson/ Flair-Sullivan
RAW NITRO	3/4 3/4	3.6 no show	2.45 mil	Bret-Helmley
RAW NITRO	3/1 3/1	2.9 3.2	1.97 mil 2.14 mil	Yokozuna Undertaker Bulldog-Tyler Road Warriors- Steiners
RAW NITRO	3/18 3/18	2.9 3.6	1.97 mil 2.41 mil	Bret-Tatanka Hogan/Savage- Flair-Sullivan
RAW NITRO	3/25 3/25	2.8 3.1	1.90 mil 2.08 mil	Owen-Johnson Flair-Giant
RAW NITRO	4/1 4/1	2.9 2.8	1.97 mil 1.87 mil	Undertaker Bret-Savage Giant-Strig
RAW NITRO	4/8 4/8	4.7 no show	3.2 mil	Michaels-Lawler
RAW NITRO	4/5 4/15	3.1 2.8	2.08 mil 1.84 mil	Goldust-Vega Luger-Strig Flair-Giant
RAW NITRO	4/22 4/22	3.3 2.7	2.23 mil 1.79 mil	Mankind-Montoya Luger-Strig Flair-Giant
RAW NITRO	4/29 4/29	3.8 2.1	2.64 mil 1.40 mil	Warrior-Yankem Giant-Flair
RAW NITRO	5/6 5/6	4.1 9	2.76 mil 1.31 mil	Undertaker-Owen Giant-Duggan
RAW NITRO	5/13 5/13	3.5 2.3	2.36 mil 1.52 mil	Michaels-Helmley Giant-Luger
RAW NITRO	5/20 5/20	3.1 2.3	2.12 mil 1.56 mil	Bulldog-Roberts Giant-Anderson

show altogether, it would have been a huge blow to its stated goal of overtaking the WWF as the top wrestling organization in North America.

But Eric Bischoff is not only a very intelligent man, he is a very confident man. He wasn't going to just throw on a show and hope it succeeded. He did everything within his power to make sure it succeeded. From the outset, he and WCW brass made one great decision after another. First, he debuted the show on a day that *Monday Night Raw* was preempted by the U.S. Open on the USA Network. Then, he stunned the wrestling world (and the WWF) by signing Lex Luger to appear on that first show. In week two, *Nitro* actually scored better Nielsen numbers than *Raw*.

Officials of both the WWF and WCW knew they were in a war. And in spite of WCW's stunning early success, Vince McMahon and the WWF were not about to roll over. They pumped further life into *Raw*, bringing the fans some of the best matches ever seen on cable-TV. It wasn't until this past August that *Nitro* actually overtook *Raw*'s lead in the overall face-to-face ratings war. Since then, *Nitro* has widened its lead each month.



Yokozuna took part in the first *Raw* Bowl, which aired on New Year's night. *Raw* barely edged *Nitro* in the ratings that evening.



Nitro's ratings have consistently beaten those of Raw in the last few months. Maybe not that many fans are interested in seeing matches involving Jose Lothario and Jim Cornette.

Can we expect the trend in WCW's favor to continue? That question might not be as easy to answer as it seems. It's important to remember that wrestling is a cyclical sport. Traditionally the popularity of the sport as a whole rises and declines every five years or so. Right now we are unquestionably in a strong growth period, and that's due in large part to the fierce war being waged by the WWF and WCW.

It might also be that cyclical patterns will form in the WWF/WCW war. People might be gravitating toward WCW at the present, but before long they might be curious as to what is going on in the WWF and tune back to Raw.

Of course, the federation brass in both organizations is well-aware of all this. The WWF will continue to work hard to upgrade the quality of its product, while WCW will not make the mistake of resting on its laurels.

In truth, one really can't predict what might happen over the next year. This, after all, is war, and nothing is more unpredictable than war.

	Date	Rating	Households	Main Event
RAW	5/2	3.3	2.29 mil.	Vader-Johnson
NITRO	5/27	2.8	1.87 mil.	S. Steiner-Sting
RAW	6/3	2.3	1.59 mil.	Roberts-Helmsley
NITRO	6/3	3.0	2.23 mil.	Sting/Luger, Steiners
RAW	6/10	2.7	1.84 mil.	Undertaker-Bulldog
NITRO	6/10	2.6	1.7 mil.	Sting/Luger, Anderson, Flair
RAW	6/17	2.3	1.59 mil.	Goldust-Roberts
NITRO	6/17	3.4	2.28 mil.	Giant-S. Steiner
RAW	6/24	2.7	1.84 mil.	Undertaker-Austin
NITRO	6/24	3.3	2.17 mil.	Giant-Tenta
RAW	7/1	2.6	1.78 mil.	Goldust-Mero
NITRO	7/1	3.3	2.22 mil.	Giant-Tenta
RAW	7/8	2.5	1.70 mil.	Vader/Bulldog-Godwins
NITRO	7/8	3.5	2.38 mil.	Mysterio-Malenko
RAW	7/15	2.6	1.78 mil.	Michaels-Bart Gunn
NITRO	7/15	3.4	2.28 mil.	Luger-Bubba
RAW	7/22	2.2	1.50 mil.	Gunn-Michaels
NITRO	7/22	2.8	1.75 mil.	Johnson, Savage/Sting, Luger-Anderson, Benoit/McMichael
RAW	7/29	2.1	1.43 mil.	Undertaker-Austin
NITRO	7/29	3.1	2.05 mil.	Savage/Sting, Luger, Flair, Benoit/McMichael
RAW	8/5	2.8	1.92 mil.	battle royal
NITRO	8/5	3.0	2.06 mil.	Luger/Sting-Nastys
RAW	8/12	2.0	1.35 mil.	Michaels-Owen
NITRO	8/12	3.3	2.24 mil.	Flair-Savage
RAW	8/19	2.9	1.96 mil.	Michaels-Yokozuna
NITRO	8/19	3.5	2.34 mil.	Giant-Savage
RAW	8/26	no show		
NITRO	8/26	4.3	2.92 mil.	McMichael/Benoit-Luger/S. Steiner
RAW	9/2	no show		
NITRO	9/2	4.6	2.74 mil.	Horseman-Dungeon
RAW	9/9	2.4	1.64 mil.	Faarooq/Jega
NITRO	9/9	3.7	2.56 mil.	Luger-R. Steiner
RAW	9/16	2.1	1.49 mil.	Sid-Faarooq
NITRO	9/16	3.6	2.45 mil.	Luger, Benoit/McMichael
RAW	9/23	2.0	1.42 mil.	Mero-Faarooq
NITRO	9/23	3.4	2.36 mil.	P. Enemy-H. Heat
RAW	9/30	2.3	1.6 mil.	Lothario/Michaels
NITRO	9/30	3.3	2.26 mil.	Vader/Cornette, Benoit-R. Steiner

IT COULD HAPPEN

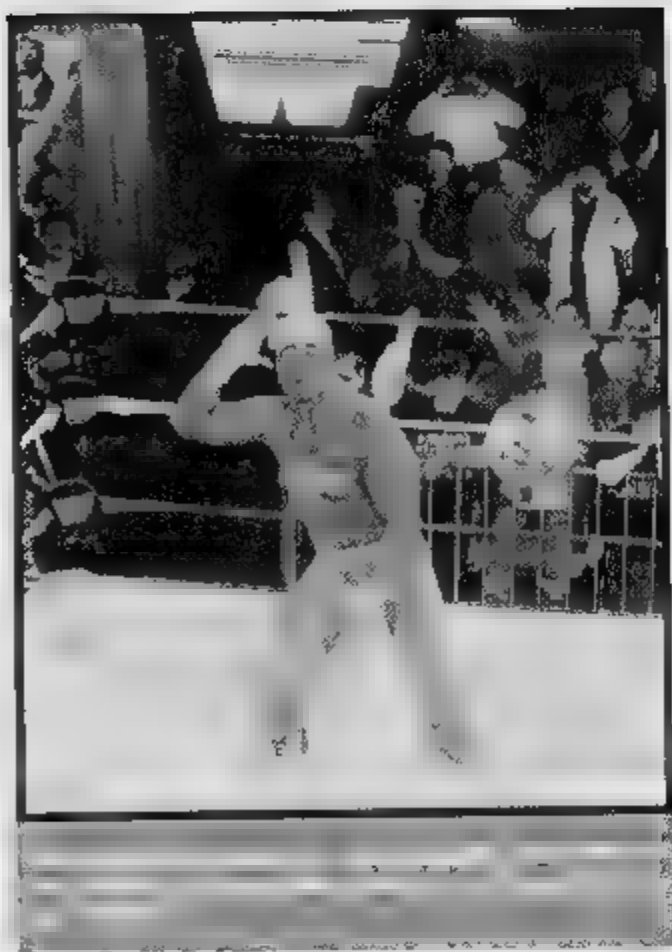
A LOOK AT THE FUTURE OF THE WWF-WCW WAR

HULK HOGAN RETURNS TO THE WWF

Hulk Hogan is a major player in wrestling. He'll be a major player until the day he retires. He did wonders for attendance at AWA cards in the early-1980s, ushered in the modern era of "rock 'n' wrestling," and was a cure for what ailed WCW in the summer of 1994. No matter what Eric Bischoff says about him now, WCW owes Hulk Hogan a debt of gratitude. But what if the WWF lured him away from his pet project, the New World Order, and its base of operations, WCW?

Despite the harsh words exchanged between the "Hulkster" and Vince McMahon in recent years, it is possible that Hogan will someday return to the place where "Hulkamania" was born. Hogan's homecoming would open the doors for others to follow. Whether he's a fan favorite or a rulebreaker, where Hogan goes, the spotlight follows, and he knows it. Kevin Nash, Scott Hall, and the rest of his crew would likely follow the spiritual leader of the NWO.

And if Hogan and other wrestlers switch allegiances, the fans (and their money) are also likely to follow. WCW would be dealt a crushing blow and would be forced to rebuild without its evil crown jewel.





TIME WARNER SELLS WCW (TO VINCE McMAHON?)

The rumors began to fly as soon as the merger of Time Warner and Turner Broadcasting was approved. According to some reports, upon completion of the merger, Time Warner was \$17-billion in debt and will likely look to sell off some of the old Turner properties, including (possibly) CNN.

If Time Warner is open to selling CNN, what does that say for WCW? Even though it is pulling down great ratings and its pay-per-view numbers are on the rise, one must not assume, given its huge payroll and production costs, that WCW generates large profits for Turner Broadcasting.

Time Warner could put the promotion up for sale to the highest bidder. The person who would value the promotion more than anybody is ... Vince McMahon. While the WWF is having money problems of its own, McMahon has connections, and those connections have connections. All those connections could raise a great deal of capital.

Time Warner could also shut down the operation. Remember, it's a large corporation that has very little interest in the long history of WCW.

THE WWF FOLDS DUE TO A LACK OF BIG-NAME TALENT

This scenario would have been very unlikely just three years ago, but with all the recent departures and defections from the WWF, is it all that farfetched now? Since the summer of 1994, the WWF has lost mem-

bers of its "New Generation" and the group that preceded it: Hogan, Savage, Diesel, Ramon, and the list goes on.

The WWF still has quality talent, including some of the top wrestlers in the world today. Unfortunately, its talent roster isn't deep anymore.

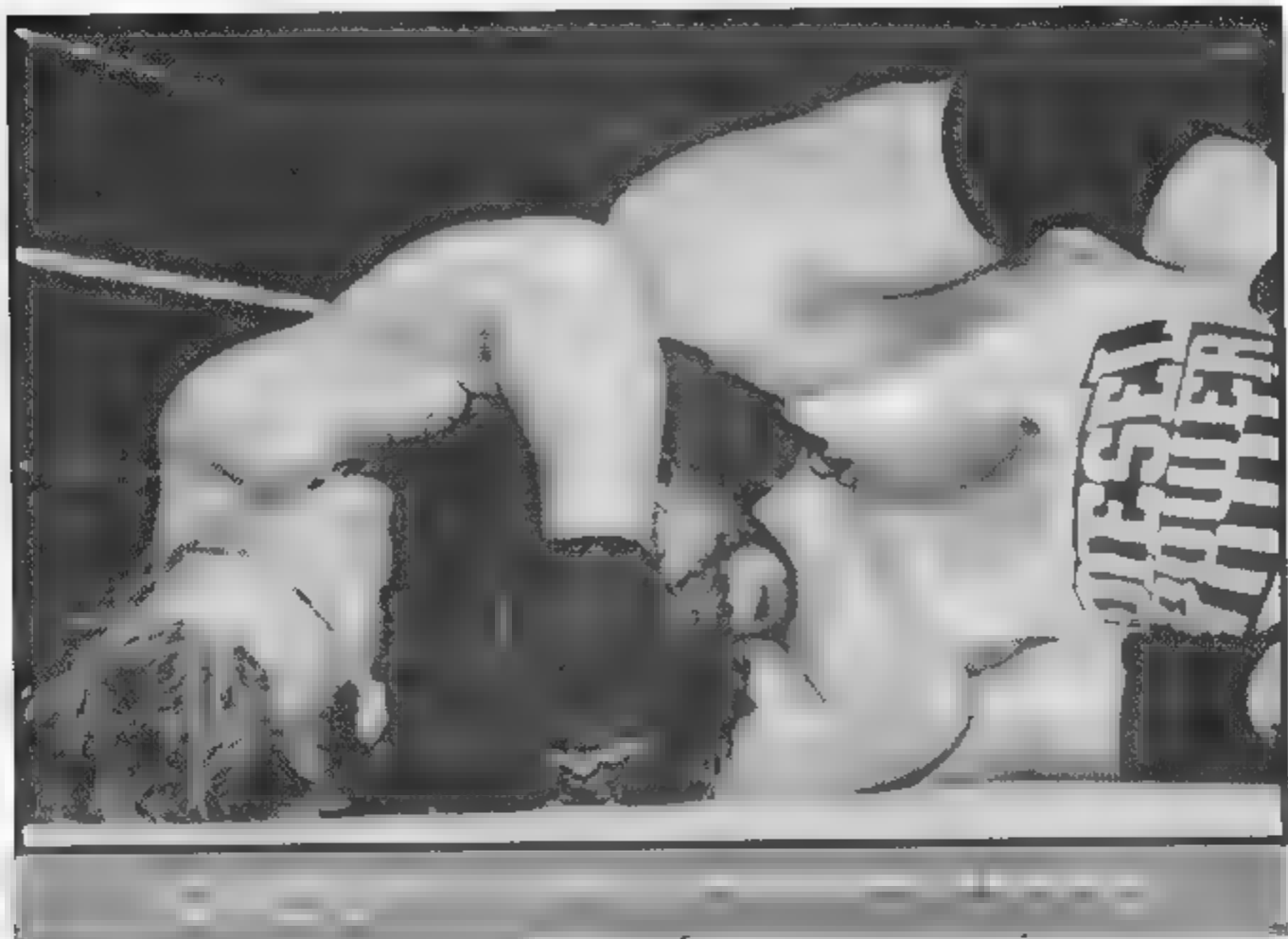
What would wrestling be like without the WWF? After all, it has been around since 1963 and the standard-bearer for wrestling since 1984. No matter how well WCW is doing, most casual fans still think WWF first when they think wrestling. Other than WCW, there would be no big winners if the WWF folded, just losers—the fans.

WWF AND WCW FORGE A WORKING RELATIONSHIP

Let's say that both promotions are surviving—even thriving—but things could be better. So, putting aside past differences, Vince McMahon and Eric Bischoff check their egos at the boardroom door and work together. In this new relationship, they forge on with their regular business and agree to meet once a year, similar to the World Series in Major League Baseball.

Neither group would ever give up its claim to its own world title. But champions could meet each other in non-title matches. Dream matches would become reality. The sport would be invigorated. Profits would soar. And the winners would obviously be the fans.

The relationship would likely be tenuous. Which promotion's rules would apply? Who would referee? But all the tension would make for an even more entertaining supercard. Food for thought.



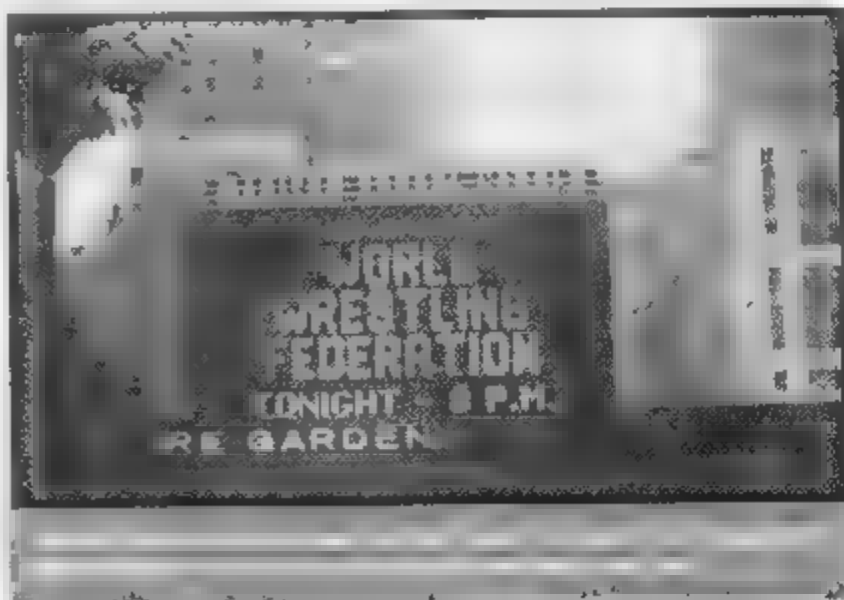
WCW INVADES WWF TERRITORY

While both the WWF and the WCW claim to be international promotions, both still have their traditional strongholds. The WWF has the Northeast, WCW the Southeast. With the increased interest in WCW, arenas around the country are welcoming that promotion with open arms.

Could one of those arenas be Madison Square Garden? WCW occasionally promotes cards in New York, Pennsylvania, and other locales in the Northeast, but what would happen if those trips became more than occasional? WCW has gotten close to MSG, but it has never promoted inside it. What if both promotions ran cards inside MSG? The WWF could protest and make threats all it wants, but if WCW drew huge crowds with its many big-name stars, it would probably be invited back. And if it succeeded in New York City, it would probably be tempted to invade other WWF strongholds.

WWF ENTERS INTO A TALENT-EXCHANGE AGREEMENT WITH ALL-JAPAN, ECW, AND/OR EMLL

Talent exchanges were unheard of 10 years ago, but faced with declining ratings and revenues, some promotions have felt forced to forge



business relationships with smaller independents WWF has worked with both the USWA and the now-defunct Smoky Mountain Wrestling, and given what happened at In Your House X, some figured the WWF and ECW might soon be working together.

By working with other promotions, the WWF might be able to expand its talent roster without increasing its payroll. All-Japan and Mexico's EMLL (a more traditional Lucha Libre promotion) would give the WWF a more international flavor. With more wrestlers to use, the WWF could also justify running monthly pay-per-views. For the WWF's sake, we hope this scenario becomes reality.

WCW OR THE WWF SECURES A NETWORK TELEVISION DEAL

The WWF knew it had truly arrived when it signed a deal with NBC to do *Saturday Night's Main Event* in the 1980s. Professional wrestling had entered the mainstream of network TV. The agreement, though, ended after five years because of declining ratings.

But with wrestling gaining in popularity again, a network deal for one of the two is a possibility. Perhaps the Fox Network, whose owner, Rupert Murdoch, is involved in a high-stakes war with Ted Turner and Time Warner. Cable ratings for wrestling are high, and when something works on cable, the networks take notice. Given that the competition between the "Big Two" is so intense, a network deal for one could tip the balance of power, as it did 10 years ago for the WWF.

CONTINUING WWF CONTROVERSY TURNS AWAY ADVERTISERS

Goldust's controversial tactics and some of Sunny's best assets are *not* family entertainment. No longer is the WWF dominated by squeaky-clean heroes. Instead of glitzy, paunchy male managers, we have the scantily clad Sunny, Sable, and Marlena... and too much R-rated language.

Some parents are reluctant to allow their children to watch. And if children and their parents are not watching, advertisers will be more hesitant to hawk their wares on WWF shows. Imagine selling action figures between vignettes of a semi-nude Goldust and a match with Mankind screaming and pulling out his hair.

No advertisers means no revenue and no major sponsors for pay-per-views. The WWF simply cannot afford that. The WWF might want to clean up its act a bit.

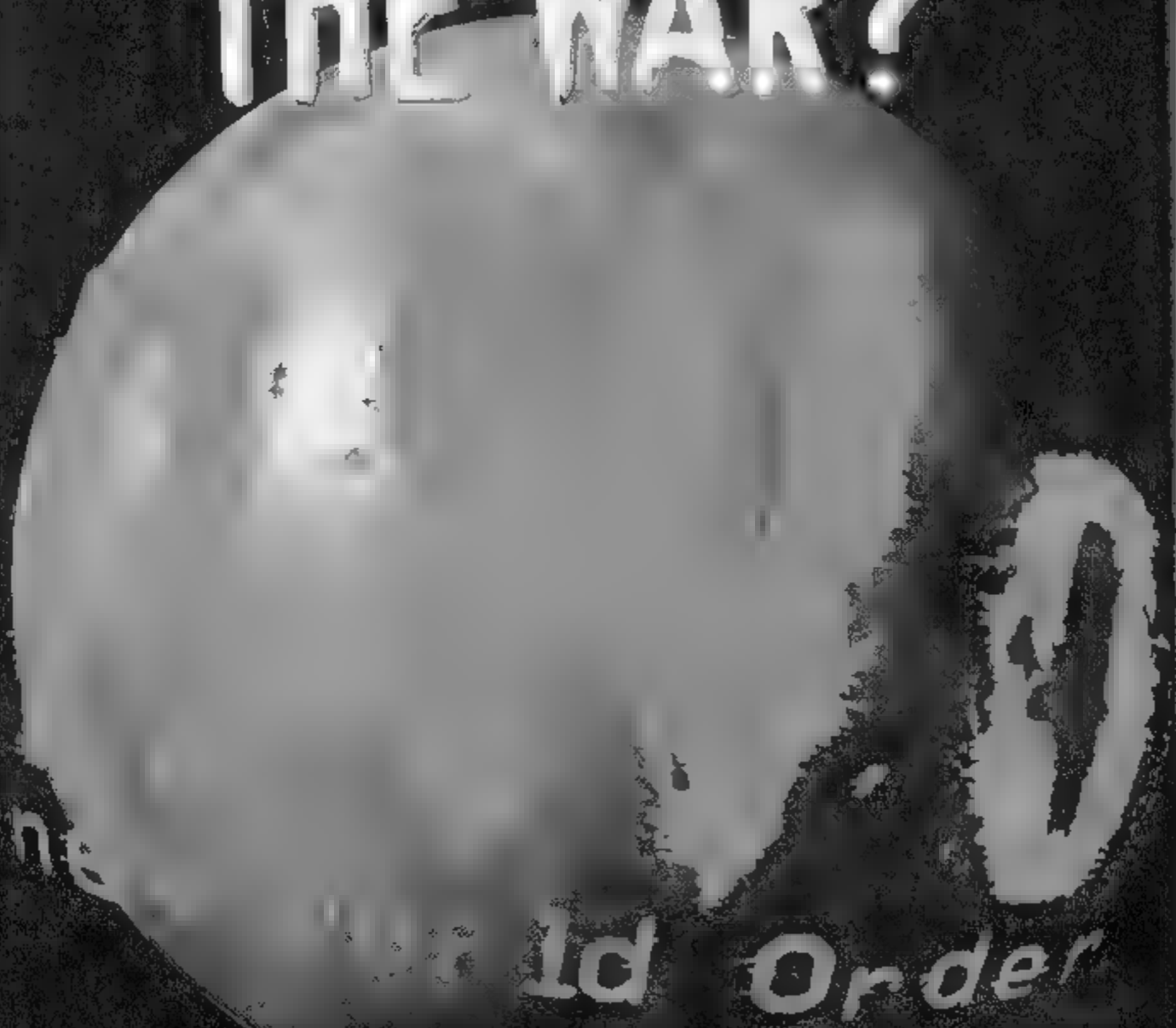
TED TURNER PRESSURES PAY-PER-VIEW NETWORKS TO BROADCAST ONLY WCW PAY-PER-VIEWS

The WWF was not the only organization that feared the merging of Ted Turner's enterprises with Time Warner, but it may have had the most to lose. The two largest cable-TV companies in the U.S. are Time Warner Cable and TC, which is a major Time Warner stockholder. The influence of Time Warner on the two major cable pay-per-view distributors, Request and Viewer's Choice, could play a major role in the wrestling war.

The WWF fought the merger for good reason. Perhaps Vince McMahon saw a PPV freeze-out as a distinct possibility. Both promotions are overly reliant on pay-per-views. A loss of that broadcasting avenue would be devastating.



WHO'S WINNING THE WAR?



GOOD LIVING THROUGH BAD ATTITUDES
ANYTHING LESS WOULD BE TOO CIVILIZED



the originals ...



... and the impostors



WWE Ratings

For period ending October 10, 1996

WORLD TITLE

1. Shawn Michaels	-	6	1	Worry about Vader!
2. Big Van Vader	+	3	2	Can smell the title
3. Sid Vicious	+	1	3	Crazy enough to be champ
4. Goldust		2	4	Getting his chances
5. Steve Austin	+	3	3	Barting "The Hitman"
6. The Undertaker	=	15	2	Enough with Mankind!
7. Mankind	-	3	6	Muther than Cactus
8. Savio Vega		2	8	Always a threat
9. The Stalker	=	1	9	Why not just Windham?
10. Crush	-	1	10	Mason likes him

WORLD TAG TEAM

1. Owen/Davey Boy	+	1	1	Do they trust Clarence?
2. Smokin' Gunns	-	2	1	Sunny-burned
3. Godwinns	-	3	2	Feding fast
4. Grimm Twins	=	1	4	Not so Bruising anymore
5. New Rockers	-	3	4	Forget these geeks

INTERCONTINENTAL

1. Marc Mero	+	3	1	Inspirational champ
2. Faarooq	-	1	2	Better without Sunny?
3. H.H. Hemmsley	-	3	3	Made the "Perfect" mistake
4. Goldust	=	4	1	Forgetting this belt?
5. Justin Bradshaw	-	2	4	Time to ditch Zeb

M=momentum; C=consecutive issues in ratings; 12-IH=12-issue high



Shawn Michaels



Sid Vicious



Mankind

WRESTLER OF THE MONTH



MARC MERO

"Wildman" Marc Mero has nothing against Ahmed Johnson, but he must have been a little happy when he heard that Johnson would have to vacate the I-C title due to a kidney injury. He had to be happy because he was one of the eight men invited to compete in the tournament for the vacant title.

Tired of wrestling mainly in mid-card matches, Mero finally had a chance to grab some gold in the WWF, and he took advantage of it.

On September 23, he defeated Faarooq in the finals of the tournament. Thanks in part to his lovely valet, Sable, Mero was able to overcome the interference of Sunny, who tried to pass Faarooq a purse with a brick inside of it and prevail. Immediately after the win, Mero thanked God, Sable, and Curt Hennig (who had been serving as an adviser to him). It was a very emotional moment.

Mero has looked very strong in rematches with Faarooq and might soon be in line for a shot at the WWF World title. For now, though, he can just enjoy the title he already has.

New'sline

By Bryan Ethier

MIND GAMES WHEN do you know you are losing your mind? Do you feel it slip away like the tide on a cold, dark winter day? Or does madness steal your sanity in the nothingness of night?

Maybe neither. You know you're losing grasp on reality when you actually believe Mankind will one

day be WWF World champion and Kevin Nash and Scott Hall will again stalk bravely about the WWF universe.

Or that Bret Hart and Owen Hart will end their discord, thanks to the help of Brian Pillman.

In essence, you know you're stone-cold nuts if you believe some of the mind games that occurred during In Your House.

Mind Games pay-per-view and the following evening at *Monday Night Raw*.

For starters, Mankind scared the life out of Shawn Michaels with an eye-opening performance that drove Michaels to the precipice of disaster. The deranged one set the tone of the contest when he emerged from a wooden casket moments before the match. Mind games? From whom do you think he stole that tactic?

Since we're alluding to The Undertaker, kudos to the semi-decayed one for gaining closure on his mental battle with the king of mind games, Goldust. Undertaker used the "tombstone" piledriver to destroy Dust at that PPV.

Undertaker has been seeking redemption since Paul Bearer dumped him for Mankind. This was the type of win that can boost his eroding confidence. Unfortunately, Mankind's impressive performance against Michaels will only steel his relationship with Bearer.

Do you see a relationship triangle of sorts? Mankind and Undertaker battling for Bearer's attention and leadership? Do you see Undertaker doing battle with Goldust and Mankind? The upcoming months should be filled with mind games for this trio. Ultimately, whoever wins the mind games will emerge with Bearer as manager. Perhaps even Goldust will align with Bearer.



Shawn Michaels probably got a tougher match from Mankind later.



A less obvious battle of emotions continues to fester as Owen and Bret Hart remain at arm's length. Despite rumors of a pending reconciliation, Bret emphasized that he has no interest in patching things up with Owen. Pillman exacerbated the quarrel between the Harts by accusing Bret of renegeing on his promise to appear at the September In Your House.

Bret Hart's response to Pillman's charges? "Brian Pillman, you are a liar. Never once did I make a commitment to you to be at a pay-per-view in Philadelphia." Bret's pronouncement came in the face of "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin's allegations that Hart is running from him. Let me tell you this: I spoke at length with Hart a few months ago and never once did Austin's name come up in the conversation. If Bret does come back, I expect him to make a run at Michaels' World title.

While Hart unwittingly plays mind games with his fans, Sunny continues to build a reputation as a quitter and whiner. After **The Smokin' Gunns** lost the tag team title to **Owen Hart** and **Davey Boy Smith**, Sunny publicly fired **Bart** and **Billy**, marking the third time in less than six months she has dumped a tag team. **The Bodydonnas** and **Henry and Phineas Godwinn** both won the tag team title under Sunny, but when they relinquished the belts, Sunny sent them on their way. Sooner or later, she's going to have a hard time finding anyone who wants her as a manager.



Maybe we should thank **Hunter Hearst Helmsley** for luring "Mr. Perfect" **Curt Hennig** back into the ring. Helmsley was sick of seeing "Perfect" "steal" all his women from ringside and issued numerous challenges to him. If "Perfect" decides to make a full-time comeback, I'm sure he'll eventually target **Michaels**, with whom he feuded in 1993.

We almost saw an ECW-WWF feud break out at *Mind Games*. During **Savo Vega's** Caribbean strap match with **Justin Bradshaw**, **The Sandman**, who was sitting in the front row with **Tommy Dreamer** and **Paul E. Dangerously**, spat beer on Vega, then smashed the partially filled can against his forehead. Eventually, all three men were escorted from the arena.

Dreamer later said he and his cohorts were just sending a message to the WWF that Philadelphia, the site of *Mind Games* and home base of ECW, was their city.

Just as strange as the ECW mini-invasion was the "return" of **Diesel** and **Razor Ramon** to the WWF. For weeks, broadcaster **Jim Ross** promised that the duo would be coming back. Turns out, of course, that it wasn't **Scott Hall** and **Kevin Nash**, but rather a new **Diesel** and new **Ramon**.

On the *Monday Night Raw* following *Mind Games*, **Ross** announced that he had loyalty only to himself and accused WWF head **Vince McMahon** of being unable to "stand the competition" that **Ross** brought.

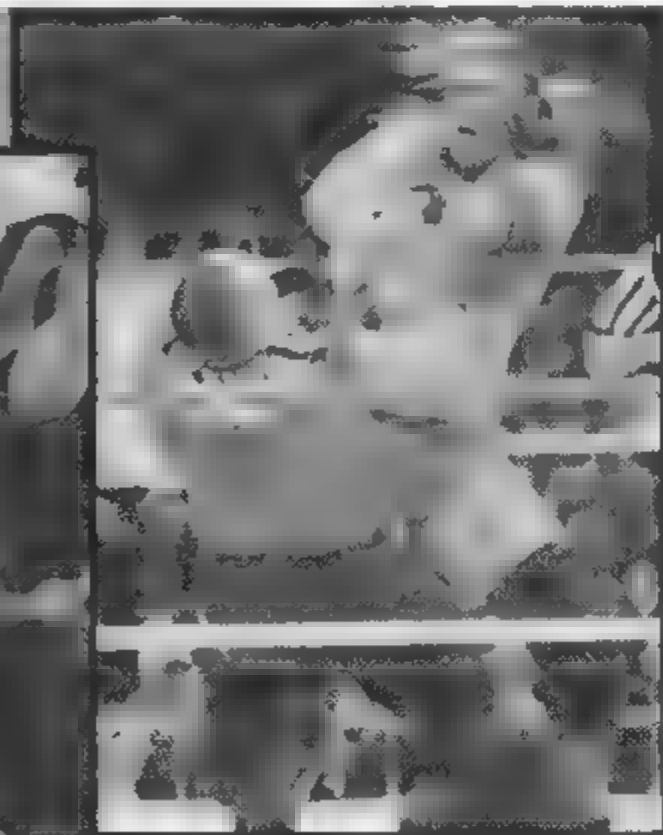
While **Ross's** savage ridiculing of his employer cast a dark light over the weekend's intriguing events, **Marc Mero's** victory over **Faarooq** in the I-C tournament finals let fans know there is some nobility in pro wrestling. **Mero**, an exciting, dashing fan favorite, captured the hearts and souls of the WWF fans. In his post-win celebration, he gave the audience a hint of his true self.

"I give all the glory to our Lord Savior Jesus Christ," **Mero** proclaimed. "I want to thank the fans and my inspiration ... **Sable**." **Sable** deserved some credit for the win, too, as she thwarted **Sunny** when she tried to interfere. **Sunny** and **Faarooq** have since split.

Big surprise there.

How can you not respect a wrestler who has his priorities in order? Do we have another role model in the making? Will **Marc Mero** one day take the World belt from **Shawn Michaels**? Can a wrestler who refuses to play mind games make it in the WWF? By winning the I-C belt, **Mero** answered that question. Yes, he can.

(below), spat beer in his face.



WCW Data Bank

HEIGHT: 5'10"

WEIGHT: 235 lbs.

HOMETOWN: Buffalo, NY

MAJOR TITLES HELD: WWF

Intercontinental (1988-current)

WCW TV (1994-95, 1995-96,

1996)

BIGGEST STRENGTHS:

Athleticism and stamina

BIGGEST WEAKNESS:

Easily distracted at times

FAVORITE MANEUVER:

"Wild Thing" acrobatic splash

CLOSEST ALLY: Sable

MOST HATED OPPONENT:

Farooq

BIGGEST MATCH: Beat

Farooq in the finals of a

tournament for the vacant

WWF Intercontinental title

(despite the interference of

Sunny), September 23, 1995

IMMEDIATE GOAL: Defend

the Intercontinental title

honorably against all worthy

contenders

LONG-RANGE GOAL: Earn

shot at the WWF World title

HE SAID IT: "Winning the

Intercontinental title is like a

dream come true. I'm just glad

Sable, my inspiration, was

there to see me do it."



MARC

MERO

This Month In ...

THE Wrestler



HULK HOGAN changed the very foundation of WCW by forming the **NEW WORLD ORDER**. But he's still not satisfied. He wants more power. One way he could get it would be by purchasing WCW. That's right—*purchasing WCW!* We'll tell you why it's not out of the question by any means. **THE UNDERTAKER** might be "mourning" the "loss" of **PAUL BEARER** now, but **MANKIND** and other WWF rulebreakers had better watch out—he'll soon be more dangerous than ever ... Find out what **NEW JACK** of **THE GANGSTAS** did to defend the honor of ECW in Detroit!

All this—and much more!—
in the January 1997 issue of
The Wrestler

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PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED



When our own **BILL APTER** went to **HULK HOGAN'S** home to photograph "Hollywood" Hogan, he came back with more than just a few pictures. He found what looks like the **NEW WORLD ORDER'S** dream roster—the men the NWO is looking to recruit. You won't believe some of the names that were on that list ...

SHAWN MICHAELS has done very well in his first six months as WWF World champion, but we have good reason to believe he won't make it to **WrestleMania XIII** as champion. Don't miss our full-color centerfold of the amazing **REY MISTERIO JR.**

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NWO 02	NWO Hat			\$15.00	
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Address	Shipping & Handling (See chart)				
City	Total				
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Independent Ratings

ECW

For period ending October 10, 1996

RANKING	M	CI	12-IH	THE SKINNY
1. The Sandman	÷	10	1	Champ without a family
2. Shane Douglas	=	3	1	Likes cracking necks
3. Raven	-	7	1	At least he has Lori
4. Pit Bull II	+	1	4	Ferocious as ever
5. Tommy Dreamer	=	11	4	Still after Raven
6. Sabu	=	4	2	Don't trust Van Dam
7. Taz	+	9	7	Needs attitude adjustment
8. Stevie Richards	=	1	8	He cracks us up
9. Brian Lee	-	1	9	Raven's top henchman
10. Louie Spicolli	+	1	10	On his way up

USWA

RANKING	M	CI	12-IH	THE SKINNY
1. Colorado Kid	+	1	1	Where'd he come from?
2. Brian Christopher	=	34	2	Just so steady
3. Jerry Lawler	-	61	1	No Memphis monarch
4. Bill Dundee	-	1	4	Troublemaker
5. Flash Flanagan	+	1	5	Flash in the pan?
6. Wolfie D	=	1	6	Fighting the good fight
7. Jamie Dundee	=	1	7	Worn out by Wolfe?
8. Brickhouse Brown	-	2	4	Very intense
9. Bart Sawyer	+	2	9	Improving slowly
10. Mike Samples	=	1	10	Dangerous veteran

M=momentum; CI=consecutive issues in ratings; 12-IH=12-issue high

AAA: AAA champion—Kinnman; 1—Ray Masterio Jr. 2—Juanito Guarrasa; 3—Pierro Aguayo; 4—Super Cole; 5—Picois; 6—La Parka; 7—Ultimo Dragon; 8—Pierroth Jr.; 9—Gen Conas; 10—Jerry Estrada.

NAASW: NAASW champion—Colorado Kid; 1—Bill Dundee; 2—Jerry Lawler; 3—Tower of Doom; 4—Charlie Parker; 5—Raggy Montgomery; 6—Man Mountain Mike; 7—A.T. Atlas; 8—Terry Zane; 9—Crusher Boone; 10—Shawn Williams.

PCW: PCW champion—Mark Mest; 1—Troy Mest; 2—Diablos Mascara; 3—Louise Diamond; 4—Fright Train Jones; 5—Boogie Woogie Brown; 6—Cheetah Muster; 7—Ace Darling; 8—Rico Richards III; 9—The Cremator; 10—Marce Crimsom.

PWF: PWF champion—George South; 1—Carolina Dreamer; 2—Patton Station; 3—Hedid Maxxine; 4—Terry Austin; 5—Cruet Connection II; 6—Russian Assassin II; 7—Chris Hennick; 8—Baby Huey; 9—Sam Ryler; 10—Gladiator II.

WYA: WYA champion—Jim McPherson; 1—Jimmy Snuka; 2—Chuck Sloan; 3—Bud Lyons; 4—Metal Maniac; 5—Erod; 6—Stryker; 7—Rodney Ford; 8—Pat the Gipper; 9—The Mummy; 10—John Rotten.

WRESTLER OF THE MONTH



THE COLORADO KID

The Colorado Kid knows what it's like to pull off a big upset. In his three years as a pro he has beaten respected veterans such as Bill Dundee, Tommy Rich, and Cactus Jack (for the North American All-Star Wrestling heavyweight title). But all those victories paled in comparison to the win he picked up on October 4 in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

On that night, he defeated Jerry Lawler for the USWA heavyweight title.

Colorado Kid surprised everyone when he rolled up "The King" for the pinfall and the title, but no one seemed as surprised as Kid himself.

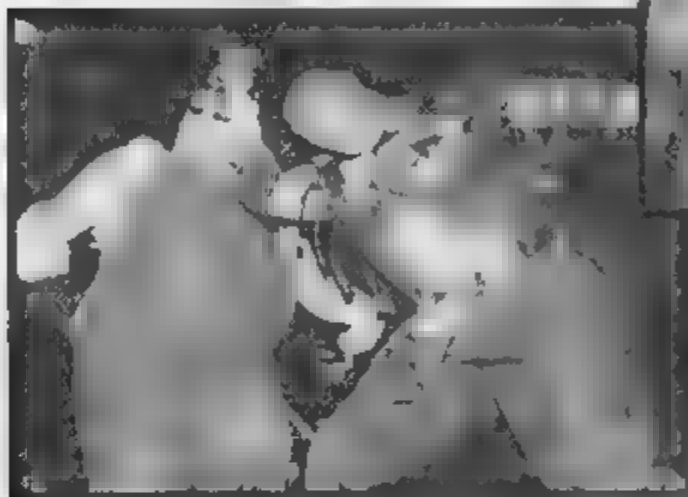
"I knew going into the match that I had the talent to beat Jerry Lawler," Kid said, "but it still took a minute or two for me to really realize what happened. It was the greatest win of my career."

Kid knows that defending that USWA title will be tougher than winning it. Lawler, Dundee, Brian Christopher, and a lot of other wrestlers with more experience than him will be waiting for title shots.

"That's okay," Kid said. "I'll be waiting for those guys, too."

LOOKS ON...

Photos by Jason Ross Lavin



WWE

THE CAN-STAS vs. THE BEE
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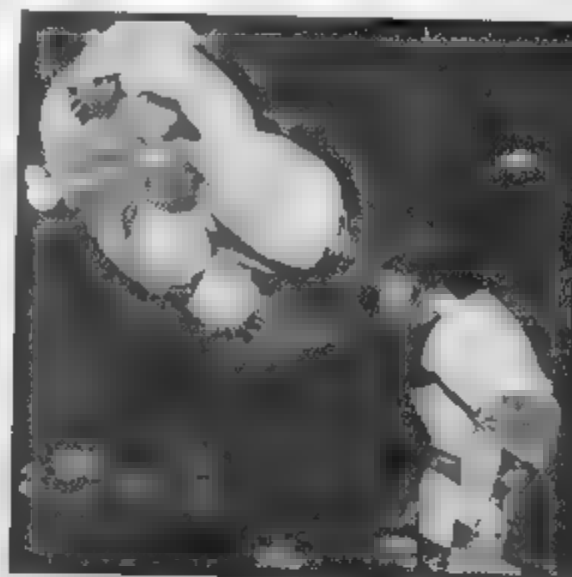
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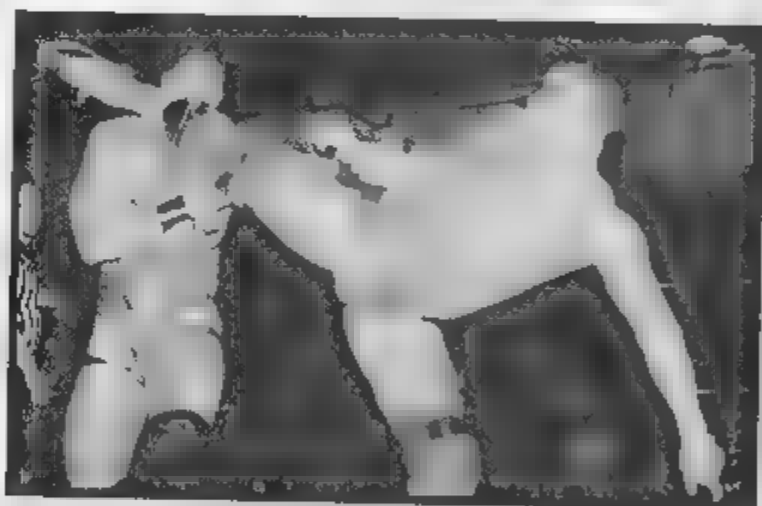
TAZ vs. JOHNNY SMITH Taz takes his opponent the
manner of the but Mr. Smith has man-
aged a few of the means Taz
felt the power of this to back



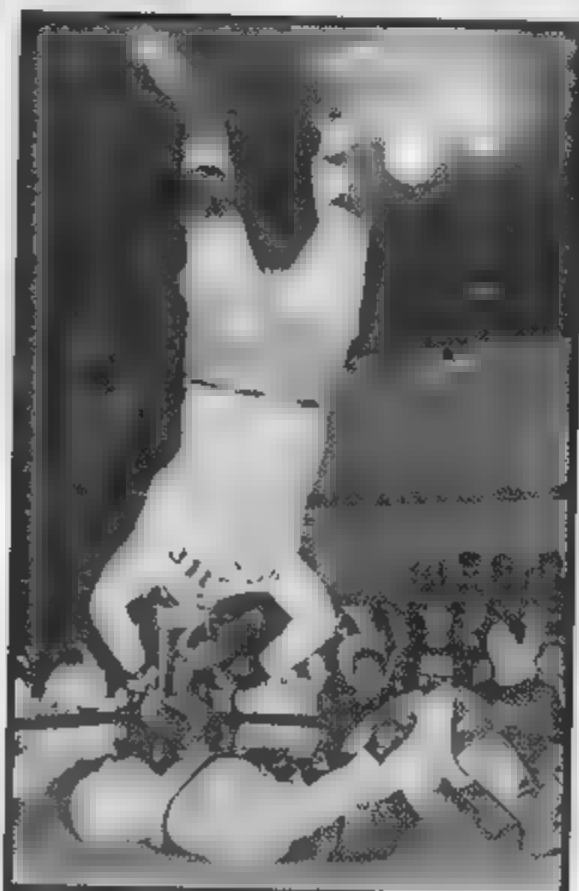
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ROYEN vs. PIT BULL If Royen knew he was in big
trouble when he was vicious and ...
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DAN KROSLAT & DO-M HIRATA vs. SABU & RICH JAM AM A spinning kick
from Kroslat, who ...
... through, he ...



By Dave Rosenbaum

ONE WEEK AFTER beating The Sandman in a steel cage match, Raven lost his ECW heavyweight title without even wrestling.

It happened while Raven was on a two-week "leave of absence" from the federation. Stevie Richards took his place in a tag team match that was supposed to pit Raven and Brian Lee against

Tommy Dreamer and The Sandman. Each wrestler had a stipulation for getting pinned, Raven's would've been that he lost the belt, so Richards took over the stipulation.

"I can't believe they let him do that," Raven screamed. "It's my belt, not his, and they have no business letting somebody else defend it for me! Stevie Richards is not the ECW champion!"

And neither is Raven after Richards was pinned by The Sandman, who's the new ECW champion.

"This belt is well-deserved," Sandman said. "I earned it. Raven could've shown up for this match, but he was running scared. He can't just run off and not wrestle."

Raven, who was positively livid when he found out that Sandman, his arch-rival, won the belt, vowed to take legal action.

"It's clear somebody in ECW didn't want me to be champion anymore," Raven charged. "Well, that's not their decision to make. This is bull."

Wrestling vagabond Bam Bam Bigelow made a surprise appearance on the same card and defeated Terry Gordy. Bigelow, whose



Richards in a tag team match.

STEVIE RICHARDS



frequent flyer miles to Japan are building up at an unprecedented rate, has no intention of staying in ECW ... or anywhere, for that matter. Looks like the big man from Mount Laurel, New Jersey, has come to a realistic conclusion about himself: "I am what I am, and I don't know what that is."

News that **Capt. Lou Albano** was coming out of retirement to wrestle Pennsylvania Championship Wrestling manager **Judd the Stud** was greeted with shock by many of our readers under the age of 30. Over the following few days, we received dozens of phone calls from readers asking, "Was Capt. Lou ever a wrestler?" The answer of course, is yes. Before he was the greatest tag team manager of all-time, Albano was, indeed, a wrestler. In fact, his greatest success (and believe me, it wasn't that great) came as a tag team with **Tony Altamore**. They called themselves **The Sicilians**, and they looked a lot tougher than they were.

Albano doesn't seem to be risking anything by

taking on **Judd the Stud**, but this is one of the strangest examples ever seen of a former athlete coming out of retirement. The only thing that comes close was when **Guy Lafleur**, the great hockey player, came back after a five-year retirement—he had already been chosen to the Hall of Fame—and played another few years in the NHL. Albano been inactive a lot longer, and even when he was wrestling, he wasn't all that active.

Speaking of Pennsylvania Championship Wrestling, **Diablos Macabre** won the junior heavyweight title in a rare five-way match against **Kid Liberty**, **Pat Shamrock**, **High Voltage** and **Dave Patena**.

Striking a blow for female wrestlers everywhere, **Madd Maxxine** has retained her hold on the PWF junior heavyweight championship. Maxxine, a woman in a man's world, has defeated such less-





er-lights as **Tyrone Knox**, **Wasted Youth**, and **The Spoller**, all of whom might want to consider a different sport. But Maxxine, who's heard enough about the weak crop of female wrestlers, thinks she's making a statement.

"No man can pin me," Maxxine proclaimed. "No man can touch me. Maybe it's time for another woman to come here and take a shot at my title. It's obvious no man is up to the task."

No man in the PWF—at least, although it would be interesting to see Maxxine try her luck against **Italian Stallion** (the man who trained her), **Terry Austin**, **George South**, or **Carolina Dreamer**.

"That's unfair to say," Maxxine said. "I'm a junior

heavyweight. They're not. But if you want, tell **Rey Misterio Jr.** to get his butt down to Carolina. I've got something to prove."

Aerial standout **Misterio vs. Madd Maxxine**? That might be interesting... for about 15 seconds.

Jerry Lawler's empire fell in a bad way when he lost the USWA heavyweight title to **Colorado Kid** in Jonesboro, Arkansas, on October 4. Colorado Kid is also the North American All-Star Wrestling heavyweight champion. Now, for those of you who recall that a few years ago, Lawler was wrestling **Bret Hart** for the WWF World title, this represents quite a come-down for the so-called "King." Lawler losing the belt isn't news, it happens all the time. But losing the belt to a young wrestler is unusual, he tends to suffer his occasional USWA losses to veterans.

What was wrong with Lawler?

"The Kid had home-mat advantage," Lawler stammered. "That's a big thing."

Oh, yeah? That's news to us.

That's all for now. Until next time, take time to enjoy an indy.



REMEMBERING DANNY HODGE

THE ULTIMATE KING OF THE RING

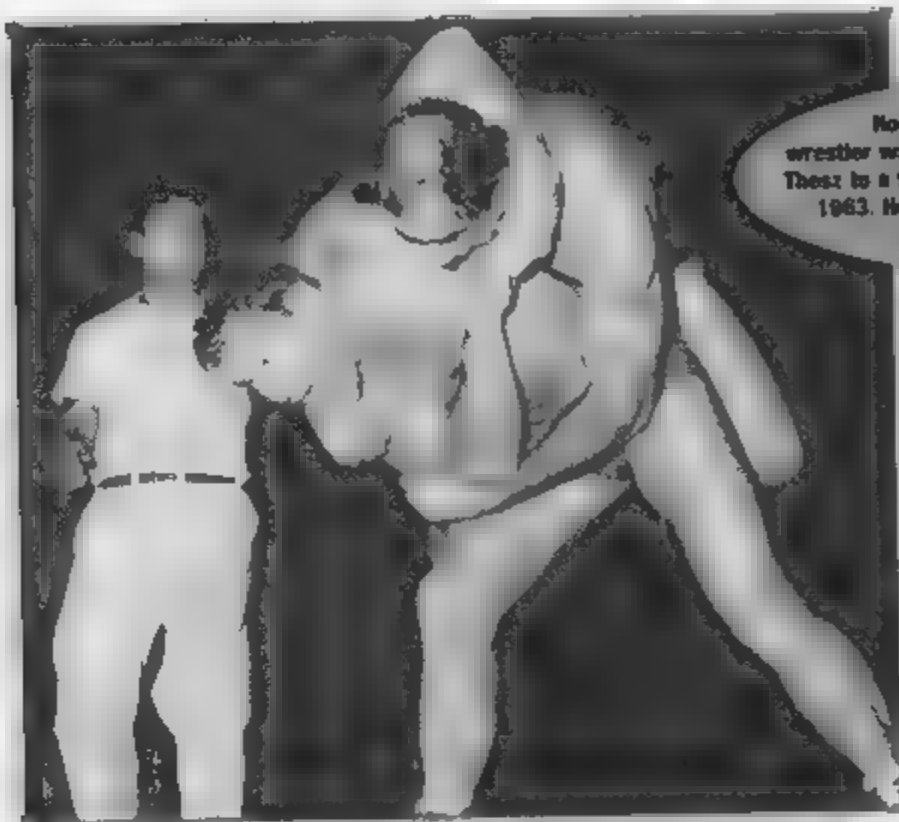


By Pete Ehrmann

Like the impact the Monday night wars have had on wrestling, what exactly made Bob Backlund snap, and what really happened to The Giant when he fell off that tall building in Detroit at Halloween Havoc 1995, it's a subject ring enthusiasts can argue about until Aido Montoya wins his first world title.

The question: Who would win a fight between a wrestler and a boxer?

Dan Hodge takes less time to consider that one than he needed to pin many of his opponents when the Perry



One of Hodge's greatest achievements as a wrestler was holding then-NWA World champion Lou Thesz to a 90-minute time-limit draw in November of 1963. He won the NWA junior heavyweight belt seven times.

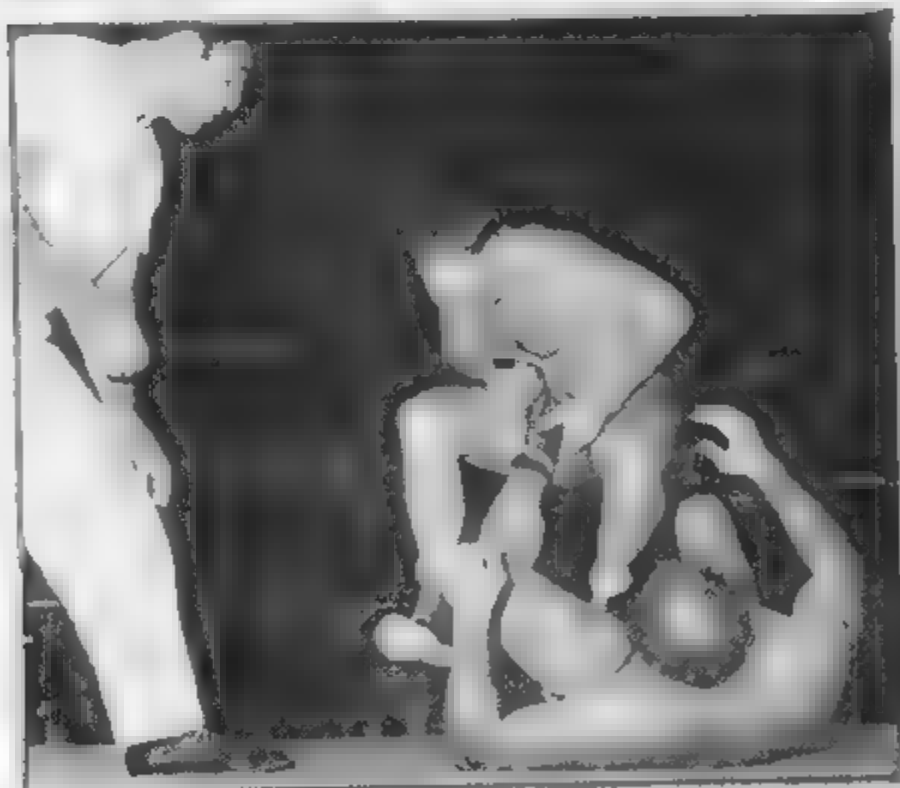
and professional wrestler, but also a national champion amateur heavyweight boxer who was being groomed to fight Floyd Patterson for the world title.

Besides which, he can squeeze your brains into apple sauce.

Hodge constitutes one-half the membership of a very exclusive club, and since the death of Paul Berlenbach in 1985, meetings have gotten even lonelier. Berlenbach, known as "The Astoria Assassin" when he won boxing's professional world 175-pound championship in 1925, had been an alternate on the U.S. Olympic wrestling team five years before that, and had won national Amateur Athletic Union wrestling titles at light heavyweight in 1922 and 1923. In the latter year, he won both the national 175-pound wrestling and boxing titles on the same weekend.

In 1928, two years after he lost his world boxing crown, Berlenbach retired from the ring and became a pro grappler.

Berlenbach and Hodge are the only two athletes to reign as national amateur champions in boxing and wrestling, which was far from the mind of the lifelong Oklahoman when Hodge was growing up on a farm near Perry, in the central part of the Sooner State. Picking cotton, milking cows, and baling hay were the top priorities of the young Hodge and his two brothers and sister, until the day their farmhouse burned down. Hodge's mother was seriously burned over 80 percent of her body and spent two years recovering in hospitals. His father was an oil wildcatter, so after his mother was



Oklahoma resident was America's top amateur wrestler 40 years ago.

"What happens when a boxer punches? He's done. Wrestling begins right there. Wrestling will win every time," says the 64-year-old Hodge.

Now, before you write Hodge off as a biased former wrestler, you should know that Hodge is one of the few people whose resume qualifies him as an expert on both sides of the question. He was not only a legendary amateur

hurt, Hodge was sent to live with a succession of relatives.

"They used to hit me," he recalls, "and I wanted to get so strong that the next hand that slapped me, I would break it."

He stumbled across his first wrestling class soon after that, and found the road to his dream. One year later, Hodge was state champion. In his last two years of high school, nobody could beat him. Upon graduation in 1951, the 18-year-old joined the Navy, and for two years he pinned everyone who got on the mat with him.

Hodge made the U.S. Olympic team in 1952, capturing fifth place at the Games in Helsinki. "I should have had the gold," he says. "But I told all the athletes there, 'I'll see you at the next Olympic Games.'"

In the interim, while he attended the University of Oklahoma on a wrestling scholarship, Hodge set and achieved another remarkable goal.

"I guess I made a commitment to myself. I asked God if there's any way he could let me go undefeated," he recalls.

Somebody up there liked him. "In

Dan Parker, received several broken ribs when he insisted on a personal demonstration of the Sooner wrestler's vaunted strength and prowess.

"I didn't realize he was so fragile," Hodge says modestly.

In fact, wrote Chapman, "Had he not studied and carefully utilized proper wrestling techniques, [Hodge] might have maimed his opponents instead of dominating them."

True to his word, Hodge returned to the Olympic Games in 1956. In Melbourne, the 174-pounder who had not lost a match since the previous Olympics, pinned his first four opponents, but lost the gold medal to a Bulgarian on a bizarre ruling that was still causing controversy in amateur wrestling circles decades later. Just two seconds before the buzzer, both men hit the mat. Hodge, who was winning by a score of 8-1, rolled free and regained his feet, but in doing so, his shoulders brushed the mat, and the Bulgarian was awarded a fall and the match—even though he wasn't touching Hodge at the time.

But Hodge accepted the verdict and silver medal with dignity, and returned to the university to complete his degree. Hodge figured his days as a competitive athlete were over following his 1957 graduation. Then 25, he took a job with an oil company in Wichita, but suddenly veered off into a whole new career he had never even thought about until he was persuaded to put on some boxing gloves.

"I never had a pair of gloves on in my life," Hodge says. "I'd had a lot of streetfights, but never with gloves."

The announcement that Olympic wrestler Dan Hodge was going to become a boxer drew horselaughs from ring experts who said that wrestlers were too musclebound to make it with their fists. That was all Hodge had to hear.

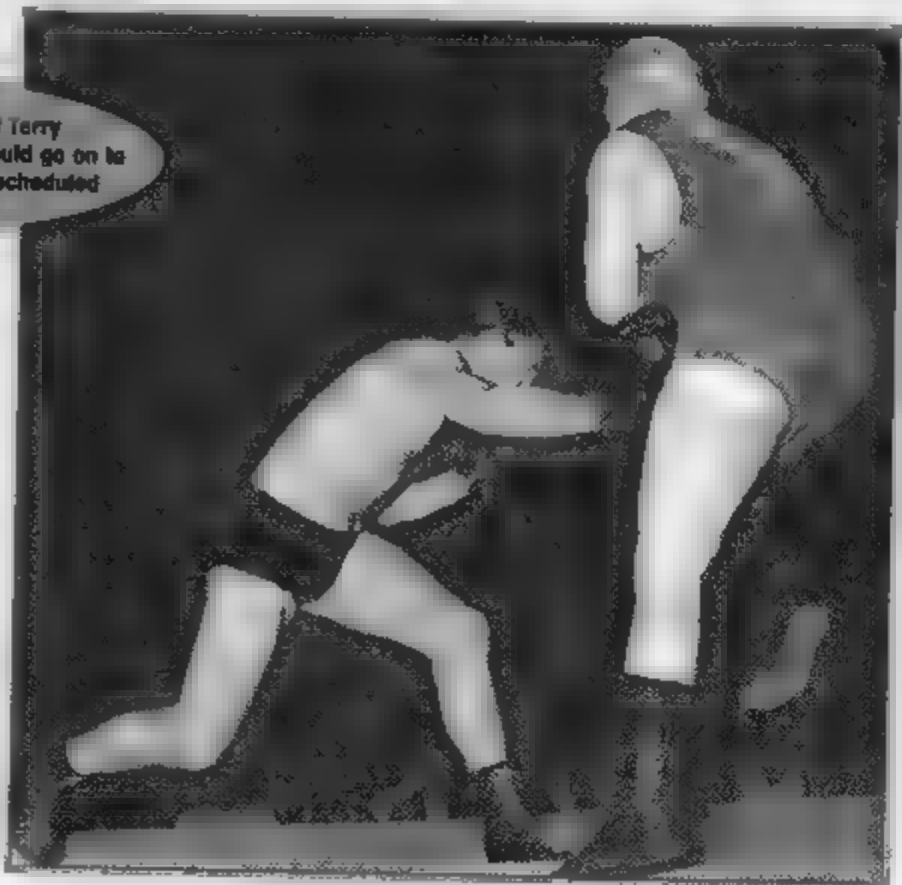
"When somebody said I couldn't do something, that's when my antennae went up," he says. "I thought, *Hey, world, here I come!* I wanted to prove that not only could I wrestle, but I could fight, too."

Nevertheless, it was noted in *Sports*

Hodge drives a right hand into the body of Terry Garvin during a bout in April 1964. He would go on to kayo Garvin in the third round of their scheduled 15-round bout.

the collegiate style of wrestling, he had no peer—indeed, no challenger," wrote wrestling historian Mike Chapman in his 1990 *Encyclopedia Of American Wrestling*. "He won every one of his 46 bouts for the University of Oklahoma, 36 of them by fall. During his junior and senior years, he pinned 22 consecutive opponents. And no collegiate foe ever took him to the mat from the standing position."

Winner of three national championships at 178 pounds, Hodge was the cover subject of *Sports Illustrated* on April 1, 1957, the only amateur wrestler ever so recognized by the magazine. The cover story's author,



Nearly unbeatable as an amateur, Hodge was one of the greatest technical wrestlers in the history of professional wrestling. Wrestlers such as Les Thatcher (right) and Little Tokyo (bottom right) were confounded by his skills.

Illustrated, "There were predictions that he would be more or less murdered in a sport entirely new to him."

Talk about misplaced concern. Hodge promptly won the local, state, and Western regional Golden Gloves heavyweight titles in 1958, and proceeded to the national tournament at Chicago Stadium, where he knocked out every opponent but one en route to the championship.

As on the mat, his forte in the ring was his incredible power. Nebraska's Buddy Traux had years of experience on Hodge, but was knocked down by his jabs and stopped.

"In the dressing room, he's crying," recalls Hodge. "I said, 'Buddy, I didn't mean to hurt you.' He said, 'Dan, I been fighting for eight years, and I never been hit that hard. I'm quitting!'"

Back then, the winners in Chicago would go on to fight the New York City Golden Gloves champions at Madison Square Garden. Inter-city champions crowned that year included future world titlists Emile Griffith (147 pounds) and Jose Torres (160), but before nearly 12,000 fans in the Garden, they were overshadowed by "Dynamite Dan."

His opponent was Charles Hood, a 6'3", 230-pound boxer whose arms, Hodge recalls, "were bigger than my legs. He looked like Joe Palooka." It was only Hodge's 17th fight, and in the first round, Hood pounded the 6'1", 190-pound midwesterner all over the ring, even knocking Hodge over in a complete somersault. At the bell ending the round, "I didn't even know where my corner was," Hodge says.

But in round two, using a right that "connected like a woodsman's ax," according to the *Sports Illustrated* account of the match, Hodge chopped



Hood down for the count, and then "couldn't get out of the ring for 10 minutes as cheering fight fans jammed the aisles."

It had been about two years since the retirement of undefeated heavyweight champion Rocky Marciano, and in the hard-hitting Hodge, some now saw the reincarnation of "The Brockton Blockbuster." Hodge's potential attracted no less than George Gainsford, who was the manager of Sugar Ray Robinson, and became Hodge's trainer as the Oklahoman began his pro ring career by knocking out Norm Jackson in the first round in June 1958.

"I didn't enjoy boxing like I did wrestling," says Hodge, who nonetheless went 5-1 in his rookie year. He was stopped in his third bout by Art Norris, but a month later won a 10-round decision in a rematch.

In his ninth pro bout, in February 1959, Hodge knocked out Garvin Sawyer in eight rounds in Miami Beach. In 20 previous bouts, Sawyer, the 1954 national amateur heavyweight champion, had failed to hear the final bell but once, and had gone the distance against contenders Zora Folley, Bob Satterfield, and Bert Whitthurst.

Hodge was on the verge of a top-10

ranking, and a victory in his next bout would have earned him a title opportunity against then-champion Floyd Patterson, who'd already been offered \$250,000 to meet the Sooner. Hodge's opponent in that April 1959 match was Nino Valdes, a 35-year-old longtime contender from Cuba whose first pro fight had come in 1941, when Hodge was still dreaming about striking back at abusive relatives.

According to the Associated Press wire service report of the fight, the 48-17 Valdes, who had a 20-pound pull in weight, "opened cuts on Hodge's face in the first round, and toyed with his outclassed foe the rest of the bout."

Hodge claims there is much more than that to the story, but is reluctant to provide details.

"I don't know how to tell you this," he says. "I don't want to disgrace their sport, okay? Just say I got a cut eye, and in the eighth round they stopped it."

But then Hodge says he found out later that the cut was actually inflicted on him by one of his own seconds. The purpose of such nefariousness, he adds, was to build demand for a rematch. He also says he was guaranteed 50 percent of the gate receipts for the Valdes fight, but ended up getting paid nothing. "When I didn't get a nickel," he recalls, "I said 'I'm through.'"

Hodge announced his retirement from boxing and went back to "the sport I love." Within nine months, he won the NWA World junior heavyweight wrestling title. Traveling around the world as a full-time professional matman, he would hold the belt seven times.

"I wanted the world to see the best. I wanted the fans to know what a [real] wrestler was," says Hodge, drawing a distinction between the mat world then and what it has become today.

"It went too much showboat," Hodge says. "They don't wrestle like we used to. They got more body-builders than wrestlers now."

Hulk Hogan vs. Dan Hodge? The "Hulkster," he says, would last about 30 seconds.

In his mid-40s, Hodge was still going strong when he fell asleep at the wheel of his car one night in Louisiana, struck a bridge, and ended up in the water. He heard bones in his neck crinkle, and says a voice in his head told him, "Hold your neck!" He did, and somehow managed to get out of his overturned vehicle. Doctors said if his broken neck had moved another quarter-inch, he would have been paralyzed for life.

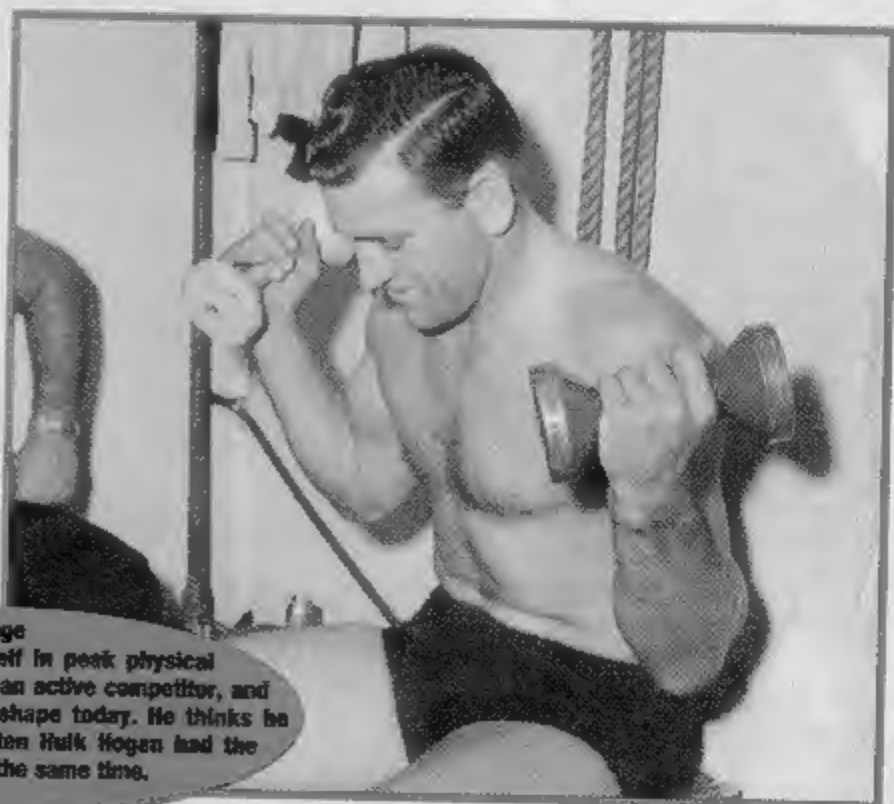
While the injury necessitated his retirement from wrestling, today the Perry strongman is in excellent health and physical condition. "I feel good. I don't have a belly that hides my belt buckle," says the member of four separate sports halls of fame. Hodge creates and markets woodcrafts with his daughter, Linda, and recently appeared in his first feature movie, a wrestling film called *One More Shot*, based

loosely on his career.

He's proud of his accomplishments on the mat and in the ring. "I did something that hardly anyone else had done, excelled at four sports—amateur and pro wrestling, and amateur and pro boxing," he says. "This is why they call me like a legend now. I had this burning desire in me."

Hodge makes many personal appearances, and "everywhere I go I have to squeeze the apples and make juice," he says, referring to his most famous and spectacular strongman feat. It started back in high school, when in his quest to become stronger than anybody else, Hodge spent hours squeezing rolled newspapers in each hand. He became powerful enough to hold a large, hard apple in his hand and crush it into apple sauce with one squeeze.

So go ahead, tough guy, and tell Hodge he's full of the stuff himself when it comes to the boxing vs. wrestling debate. But if you know what's good for you, refrain from telling the man who knows the ropes in both better than anybody else alive to get a grip. □



Hodge always kept himself in peak physical condition when he was an active competitor, and he's still in pretty good shape today. He thinks he could have easily beaten Hulk Hogan had the two wrestled at the same time.

Independent Data Bank

HEIGHT: 6'2"

WEIGHT: 231

HOMETOWN:

Philadelphia, PA

MAJOR TITLES HELD: ECW

TV (1996); ECW tag team

(with Pit Bull I, 1995)

BIGGEST STRENGTH: Raw

power

BIGGEST WEAKNESS: The

tragic loss of his partner, Pit

Bull I

FAVORITE MANEUVER:

Super bomb (power bomb off

the top rope)

CLOSEST ALLY: Pit Bull I

MOST HATED OPPONENTS:

Shane Douglas and Francine

(his former manager)

BIGGEST MATCH: Defeated

Shane Douglas for the ECW

TV title, June 1, 1996

IMMEDIATE GOALS: Get

revenge on Shane Douglas for

breaking one of Pit Bull I's

vertebrae; and regain the

ECW TV title from him

LONG-RANGE GOAL: End

Douglas' career

HE SAID IT: "Shane Douglas,

you might have taken my

partner out, but the legacy of

The Pit Bulls will haunt you

forever!"



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